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THE NEW

STATESMAN AND NATION

The Week-end Review

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THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION—The Week-end Review. *Incorporating The New Statesman, The Nation and Athenaeum, Week-end Review.*

LORD RUNCIMAN has gone to Prague and the stage is set for a contest which seems certain to be a long one, and less certain, we fear, to have a happy ending. The gulf between the concessions offered in the Czech Government's proposals and the demands of the Sudeten Germans yawns wide, and neither Herr Henlein nor his advisers and masters in Berlin have shown much disposition to bridge it—or even to approach it in a conciliatory spirit. The German press was again abusing the Czechs at the week end, while the Henlein party have issued pamphlets expressing their disgust with the Nationalities Statute. At the Breslau Sports Festival on Sunday 40,000 Sudeten athletes mobbed Hitler in their wild enthusiasm, and Hitler himself turned his back on the Czechoslovakian flag. But despite the omens there are grounds for the belief that counsels of prudence will prevail with Hitler—without prejudice to his plans for the future. In that case Lord Runciman's task as mediator will be at once easier and more laborious.

Wars and Rumours of War

A new war cloud hangs over the Far East. For several weeks Japan and the U.S.S.R. have been disputing the possession of the hill of Changkufeng, an important strategic point on the borders of Siberia, Manchukuo and Korea. In the last few days, while diplomatic exchanges between Moscow and Tokio have continued, the troops and bombers have taken a serious hand in the fray. There have been fierce attacks and counter attacks and pretty heavy casualties are reported on either side. No one of course can tell what will come out of this ugly situation; but there is a general expectation that the "incident," graver though it looks than any that have preceded it, will end as an "incident." Neither the U.S.S.R. nor Japan, we are sure, really wants war. The Japanese have already bitten off more than they can chew in China, and the Russians are not likely to underestimate the danger to which they are exposed on their European flank. Nevertheless it is not easy to see how, in the present temper of the disputants, the affair is to be peacefully settled; and there is no likelihood, we fear, of foreign mediation proving helpful. Meanwhile in Spain there are three big battles in progress, with the advantage on the whole to the Government forces. Some significant figures, by the way, have just been issued in Rome of Italian casualties in the Spanish war. In the ten days' fighting from July 13th to the 24th, between Teruel and Barracas, 232 officers and men were killed and 1,613 wounded; while the total Italian losses down to the end of May were close on ten thousand.

Peace in the Balkans

The treaty signed at Salonica on Sunday night puts the Balkans in the unusual position of being a bright spot in the general international gloom. Bulgaria now joins with the other Balkan Entente Powers—Greece, Roumania, Jugoslavia and Turkey—in a pact of non-aggression and arbitration. They on their part agree to the renunciation of the military clauses of the Treaty of Neuilly of 1919 which abolished conscription in Bulgaria and put some limitations on her armed forces. These clauses had not been enforced, it is true, to the last letter, but they were irksome to Bulgaria, and their abolition raises her status and will put her in a better temper. And though she may still nourish territorial grievances, she undertakes not to resort to force for the redress of these or for the settlement of any dispute which may arise among the signatories. This extension of the Balkan Pact, in short, with its promise of co-operation on peaceful lines, will be warmly welcomed not only by the Balkan States themselves, but by all good Europeans. It should help to check, though we can hardly hope that it will defeat, the machinations of certain bad Europeans in the Balkan peninsula.

Liberals at Loggerheads

That foreign policy should have bulked large in the discussions at this year's Liberal Summer School is not unnatural. Nor is it surprising, having regard to the cleavage of opinion in the country as a whole, that there should have been a sharp clash of views. Lord Samuel took the line that in relation to major international issues the League had ceased to have effective existence. This being so, the formation *à la* Churchill of a bloc of democratic States against possible aggression from the dictatorship countries would bear little resemblance to conceptions of League action. It would also involve the risk that it might be regarded in Germany as an encirclement. The way to preserve peace was, he urged, to refrain from intervening in the affairs of other countries and to meet fairly the dictatorships' legitimate grievances and claims, whatever feelings we might entertain as to their internal regimes. From this policy Mr. Ramsay Muir dissented vigorously. The dictators, he argued, had declared war against the system of liberty, and in that war he was prepared, at need, to fight. He would not deny " justice " to any Power, strong or weak ; but peace could only be maintained if aggressive dictators were faced with a firm, united front of democracies. The audience was clearly divided into two camps—those who believed that Nazi Germany might be made reasonable by concessions, and those who feared that the second (ideological) world war had already begun.

The King's Commission

The reforms announced last week in the conditions of service for commissioned officers in the Army are clearly an endeavour to meet the legitimate argument that a modern, mechanised fighting force equipped for scientific warfare requires as its leaders men of brains and military aptitude whom the leisured, moneyed class cannot be relied on to supply. Hence the Army—and similar betterment of conditions has been announced also for the Navy and R.A.F.—must be made a more attractive profession for an able man without private means. Under the new scheme, scholarships at Woolwich and Sandhurst covering the full cost of training will be granted without limit of numbers, and three-year grants of £20 a year (subject to a means test) will be given to a hundred newly-commissioned subalterns every year. These grants do not err on the side of generosity, but scales of pay are slightly raised, and promotion, instead of depending on vacancies, will be automatic—to captaincy after eight years', and to majority after seventeen years' service. At worst, even if he never rises to the rank of battalion commander, an officer can now look forward to retiring at 46 with a pension of just over £400 a year. Not a glittering prospect, but a great improvement on present conditions. Moreover, earlier retirement ages for senior officers and shorter tenures of command will do something to relieve congestion at the top.

Milk

The Minister of Health talked hopefully in the House of Commons the other day of arrangements for a larger and cheaper supply of milk to maternity and child welfare clinics ; and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education earlier in the same sitting referred to the increase in the numbers of children receiving milk in the elementary schools. On March 31st, 1938, he said (in spite of the fall of 38,000 in the total number in the schools), there were 173,000 more children receiving free or cheap milk than six months earlier. This is well as far as it goes. But it does not go nearly far enough. One-third of a pint per day is inadequate ; a child ought to have a pint. Moreover there are something like two million school children who are not getting any milk at all. Even when a liberal allowance has been made for those who do not need it or will not drink it, there remains a great host of children—and adults, too—who both need it and want it, but who are deprived of it by reason of their poverty. The scandal of retail milk prices in this country has been constantly exposed. The remedies stare the Government in the face, but it will not apply them. They include a revision of its own policy, changes in the machinery and the powers of the Marketing Board and drastic reforms of the present wasteful system of milk distribution.

Protecting the Investor

The Government's formulation of the promised measure to protect the public from the depredations of the financial crook has been leisurely, but the provisions of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Bill, published on the eve of the recess, are commendably drastic. The Bill is comprehensive in its scope and goes a good deal further than the somewhat timid proposals made by the Bodkin Committee on Share-pushing a year ago. In future, all firms dealing with the public in stocks and shares will have to secure a licence from the Board of Trade unless they are members of a recognised Stock Exchange. Property societies will no longer be able to operate under the lax provisions of the Provident Societies Acts unless their purpose is genuinely humanitarian. Rules are laid down for Unit Trusts ; the police are given wider powers of search in cases of suspected fraud, and circulars inviting participation in so-called " commodity pools " are banned. Finally, the law relating to " misrepresentation " is greatly tightened—a point which is discussed by Dives in our

City columns. The Bill is a good one, but might usefully be reinforced by an additional clause requiring licensed dealers—into whose company crooks, we fear, may still occasionally slip—to deposit substantial sureties with the Board of Trade.

New Factories

The returns of new factories and factory extensions for 1937, just issued by the Board of Trade, shows a total of 541 new factories and 237 extensions, as compared with 542 and 187 for 1936. This is not at all satisfactory, in view of the relatively prosperous conditions of the year, especially as 361 factories were closed (394 in 1936). Moreover, most of the new factories are small, only 21 of them employing more than 300 people. The regional distribution shows that nothing effective has yet been done to bring additional employment to the distressed areas. New factories in Wales employed only 1,000 persons altogether, and in Scotland 1,100, as against nearly 16,000 in Greater London and 10,600 in the Midlands. The North-Western counties did better, with 11,000, but the North-East had only 4,000; and the total for all areas was not much above 40,000, whereas the factories closed had been employing 28,500 persons. The table further shows that only 146 of the new factories were producing wholly or partly for export, and that 392 looked to the home market as their normal outlet. In effect, the drift to Greater London and the Midlands is still proceeding and new capital investment is neither doing anything appreciable to help the depressed areas nor providing in the aggregate any sufficient volume of employment. This, maybe, is not news; but it is valuable statistical confirmation which we hope the Royal Commission on the Location of Industry will take to heart.

Life's Legal Value

Attention has been drawn by the *Times* this week to a question which has been causing increasing perplexity to students of legal decisions. What value should be put by the Courts on "expectation of life" when life is cut short by an accident for which another party—an individual or, more frequently in practice, an insurance company—is legally responsible? In the amounts which juries have awarded it is difficult to trace a consistent thread of logic. The deceased in two recent cases were young men in their twenties. The awards were £2,000 in the one instance and £1,030 in the other—implying, on the Psalmist's actuarial basis, that expectation of life is worth something like £40, or alternatively £20, a year. Yet the Courts have decided (Flint *v.* Lovell) that £500 a year is the correct value of a septuagenarian's expectation of life, whereas compensation for the death of a victim aged five has been assessed at only £1,250, though "expectation" in that instance was presumably about 65 years. It is not easy to see how a standard value can be set on life, especially since the claimants in most cases are dependents of the deceased whose enjoyment of benefits, had the fatal accident not occurred, may be problematical. It is far from satisfactory, however, that life should be valued by different juries at figures so variable.

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VALUE FOR MONEY

THERE was a very important debate in the House of Commons before it rose for the holidays on the administration of the public health. It was not only the occasion of what was called his "maiden speech" as Minister of Health by that highly experienced maiden, Mr. Walter Elliot. It raised, directly and indirectly, issues concerning the conduct and progress of the social services as a whole. There was on the Opposition benches—and not on those benches alone—a lively fear of a new "economy campaign," another effort to pare down social expenditure. Some substance has been given to this anxiety by talk outside and inside Parliament of the monstrous burden of rearmament and of the probability of a serious trade recession. And it was increased in the debate last week by a speech from Sir Waldron Smithers, a representative of that section of Tories which always has its knife into the local authorities and the administration of the social services. "Local authorities," said Sir Waldron Smithers, "are organised for extravagance rather than for economy." It was easy, of course, for other speakers to refute this preposterous statement, and to convict its author of ignorance of local government and local finance. What is not so easy is to make the misguided apostles of economy understand the significance of the social services and of local democracy.

Mr. Elliot is not of the Smithers school of thought—if thought it can be called—and will never, we hope, be a willing party to any "axing" of his own and kindred departments. And nobody need quarrel with him for saying that a heavy public expenditure can be defended only if it can be shown that value for money is being obtained. It is right that we should have the closest scrutiny. But who that studies the facts fairly will deny that value for money is being obtained from our expenditure on health and education, on unemployment insurance and assistance, pensions, child welfare and the rest? It may well be that not every penny is spent to the best advantage; but that is not an argument for saving pennies or pounds, but for spending them better. There is one valid criticism of the existing social services: they are inadequate. There are defects which need remedying, gaps which ought to be filled up. They are crying out for extension, not for contraction. In plain words, we want more value—for more money.

Take the Health Insurance scheme. It makes no provision for the dependent children of contributors, or for a large number of independent workers with low incomes. Its cash benefits for sickness and disablement are far too low, and its standard medical benefits are unduly limited in scope. The Approved Society system is unsatisfactory and wasteful; here, indeed, is a reform that might well save money. There is the same need for overhauling and improving the unemployment insurance and pensions schemes. Or take, again, housing. The Minister gave some encouraging figures to show the progress that is being made. But other speakers gave figures to show how relatively slow that progress is. Two families out of every three in London, said Mr. Silkin, are sharing a house, and four working-class families out of every five are living in a house or dwelling of some sort which was originally built for a single family. He referred, too, to

150,000 underground rooms in London where people are living in abominable conditions. And he added that, in his calculation, it will take something like 16 or 17 years to deal with the existing slums—while the problem of new slums is constantly arising, for it is estimated by the L.C.C. that 3,000 dwellings every year fall within that category. It is fantastic to pretend that the State and the local authorities are spending too much in the rehousing of the people. "When those of my friends," said Sir Francis Fremantle, "who talk of economy without knowing very much about the housing movement think of this expenditure as if it were money lost it is because they do not realise . . . what an asset it is."

Nor is this all. It is not only new or more rapid developments of the existing schemes that are required. There are gaps—and one particularly glaring one—to be filled, if the social services as a whole are to be regarded, in Mr. Arthur Greenwood's words, as a "great human agency for enriching the lives of the mass of the people." Despite safeguards against this or that contingency, vast numbers of the people are living poverty-stricken lives under an economic system which makes no public provision for the upkeep of the next generation nor affords the parents a wage that will enable them to provide adequately for their own children. It is idle to suggest that under present conditions every worker can be paid a living wage—a living family wage. On the extremely modest basis adopted by Mr. Seebohm Rowntree in calculating his "Human Needs Standard" for a man, wife and three children, that would involve a minimum wage of 53*s.* a week, or for rural workers of 41*s.* a week. What hope have myriads of industrial or agricultural labourers of getting such wages? In all the circumstances the case for a comprehensive scheme of family endowment or children's allowances is overwhelming. It is not a new nor a Utopian proposal. It has been argued again and again; within the last month or two it has been put forward earnestly by Mr. Amery and other Conservatives, in Parliament and in the press; it has been discussed at the Liberal Summer School this week. (And now, for those who want an admirably clear account of it we commend Miss Marjorie Green's *Family Allowances*, a 6*d.* pamphlet just published by the Family Endowment Society.) Schemes have been put into practice in one form or another in Australia and New Zealand and in several European States, notably France, Belgium and Italy. Why should we, who boast of leading the world in our collective provision for the contingencies that threaten the workers' standard of life, lag behind in this most common contingency of all?

There are three main methods by which family allowances can be operated. They may be made a charge on employers of industry; they may be organised as another contributory insurance scheme; they may be paid directly, like non-contributory old age pensions, by the State out of general taxation. Each method has its advocates, but we have no space here to argue the relative advantages and disadvantages. We can only say summarily that the third is, in our judgment, by far the best. It is, in Miss Green's words, "an acknowledgment by the State of the science of parenthood, an investment in the well-being and efficiency of the next generation from which the whole community will benefit and to which the whole community should, therefore, contribute." It puts the least burden on those who can least bear it, and it is the least likely to encounter opposition based on the fear (whether well- or ill-grounded) that it will hamper and weaken the collective bargaining power of the workers. The main difficulty, of course, is financial. It might cost the Exchequer from £70,000,000 to £120,000,000 a year (though these figures, calculated in 1930, would be lower now with the fall of the birth rate), according to whether a reduced allowance was given for children subsequent to the first or a uniform 5*s.* a week was allowed for each child. We do not believe for an instant that the country could not afford such a sum, or that the necessary increase of taxation would adversely affect investment and employment. We believe, on the contrary, with Mr. Keynes, that redistributive taxation, raising consuming power, is calculated to increase investment and employment. In any case, this problem of poverty, with its resultant mischiefs of the under-nourishment, illness and debility, and often the intellectual stunting, of a great part of the population, has got to be faced and solved. And we feel no doubt that family endowment would give us, as it has given other countries, "value for money."

COLONIAL JUSTICE

[FROM A LEGAL CORRESPONDENT]

FROM time to time considerable public anxiety is experienced about the quality of the justice administered in our Colonial empire, and recent proceedings in Gibraltar, arising out of the arrest of the S.S. *Stancroft* in Spanish territorial waters at Valencia, have done nothing to allay this anxiety. It will be remembered that the ship was taken from Valencia to Gibraltar and completely discharged, as a result of which 99.7 per cent. of her cargo was found to be entirely unobjectionable and reloaded, while the remaining 0.3 per cent. was possibly, but by no means certainly, within the description of prohibited goods contained in an Order in Council adopted under the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Munitions to Spain) Act, 1936. The master of the ship, Captain Scott, was unsuccessfully prosecuted, and proceedings for forfeiture of the goods were also taken. It was out of these forfeiture proceedings, which came before the Chief Justice of Gibraltar (the only judge in Gibraltar, apart from the lay magistrates), that the major anxieties have arisen.

The Chief Justice adopted a surprising attitude. As soon as the proceedings were instituted, the Spanish Government, under a well-known rule of International Law, intervened and asked that the proceedings should be stayed and the goods delivered up to them, on the ground that the goods were their property. In the circumstances the Judge had really no option but to stay the proceedings; and one would have thought, indeed, that he had no option but to order the delivery up of the goods, since these had been arrested by his Court under the proceedings which he was dismissing.

The Chief Justice did order the proceedings to be stayed, but he refused to order the delivery up, and in connection with that refusal he volunteered the following observations:

> It might well be argued that the authorities are justified in detaining this property, which is admitted to be munitions of war, until effective guarantees are given that it will not reach Spain until after the termination of the present distressful civil war.
>
> If shipped on a British ship to a Spanish port, it would be a contravention of the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Munitions to Spain) Act of 1936, and if allowed to go by a foreign vessel it would appear contrary to the policy of Non-intervention.
>
> That however is a matter for diplomatic action and not for this Court.

It is perhaps a pity that the Chief Justice did not remember that this was "not a matter for this Court" before he made the statements quoted. But it is difficult to understand in any case on what ground he could suggest that this property of the Spanish Government should be detained during the period of rebellion. It was the property of a friendly State not in the eye of the law engaged in war, and it had been forcibly removed by His Majesty's Navy from the territorial waters of that State, after a coastwise voyage from port to port in that State. On what principle of law or politics should a friendly State be prevented from recovering that material and using it in its own defence against its rebels? But the Chief Justice went further. He refused costs to the successful applicants and made these observations:

> I have no sympathy with the applicants, the Spanish Government, who have caused trouble to the British Government by loading an illegal cargo on a British ship.
>
> I consider that the costs ought really to be borne by the shipping company. I attribute the recent bombing of British ships engaged in lawful trade to their intervention in this conflict, and to the fact that contraband goods have been put aboard this British ship.

It is to be hoped that these two statements are unparalleled in the history of judicial unwisdom. They deserve, and do not quite defy, analysis. With regard to the Spanish Government "causing trouble to the British Government," the only trouble suffered by the British Government, so far as one can see, is that they instituted of their own motion two sets of legal proceedings both of which failed and were virtually bound to fail. That is hardly the fault of the Spanish Government. As to the accusation that the Spanish Government loaded an illegal cargo on a British ship, apart from the point that the evidence before the Chief Justice showed that the cargo in question had not been loaded on this ship by the Spanish Government or with their knowledge, and from the further minor point that it is a little misleading to describe one-third of one per cent. of a vessel's cargo as "a cargo," the most objectionable part of this statement is the use of the word "illegal." The question of legality had not of course been raised before the Judge, nor could it be raised. In any case the shipment of the goods, a coastwise shipment from Barcelona to Valencia, was wholly lawful by Spanish law; nor could it be held illegal by English law unless it were established, first, that the goods fell within certain of the descriptions to be found in the Order in Council, and secondly that the Act of 1936 applied to coastwise trade in Spain. Neither of these points was before the Chief Justice, and on the latter point—a not unimportant one—the magistrates in Gibraltar had a few days before decided that the Act did not apply to coastwise shipping, and it was known that the Gibraltar Government was attempting to appeal from that decision to the Chief Justice. It was thus vitally important that the Judge should not, without hearing argument, and in a case in which the point did not arise, express from the Bench what in effect was a decision in favour of the Gibraltar Government on the appeal if they should ever succeed in bringing it on.

Further, let it be remembered that the shipping company, the owners of the ship, were not and could not be parties to the litigation, which concerned only the British Government, the Spanish Government, and the shippers of the goods, a firm in Barcelona. And yet the Chief Justice says, in the absence of the shipowners, that they ought to pay the costs of these proceedings. He attributes "the recent bombing of British ships engaged in lawful trade to their intervention in this conflict." So far as is known, they had not intervened in the conflict. To have intervened would presumably have been a very serious offence. Why should he accuse them of it? And, above all, why should he say that the recent bombing of British ships engaged in lawful trade is to be attributed to that "intervention"? He goes on to attribute this bombing to the fact that "contraband goods have been put aboard this British ship." The word contraband is of course meaningless, as when there is no war there can be no contraband. One presumes that he meant "illegal," and if that be so, the criticism of his use of the word in the earlier sentence need not be repeated. If it were justifiable to suggest that part of the cargo was illegal, the further suggestion that the presence of this part cargo, the nature of which had only been ascertained in Gibraltar a few weeks before, could have been the cause of any extension of the long standing bombing of British ships trading to Spain is too grotesque to require comment. It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister has stated in the House of Commons that none of those British ships have been engaged in unlawful trade in Spain. Yet Mr. Malcolm MacDonald has refused to consider an inquiry being held into the conduct of the Chief Justice.

These proceedings also give rise to considerable anxiety as to the proper conduct of the Colonial prosecuting authorities. As already mentioned, the Gibraltar Government is desirous of bringing before the Chief Justice on appeal the case in which the Master was acquitted. Under the Act of 1936, if goods are carried in contravention of the Act, and if the Master of the ship is privy to the contravention, he may be prosecuted and fined or imprisoned. In the proceedings in question, the Master was prosecuted in respect of the carriage of the goods which were also subject of the forfeiture proceedings mentioned above, and the only witnesses who gave any evidence on the vital point of privity (the Observation Officer and the Second Officer of the ship), were described by the Chairman of the Bench of two magistrates as follows:

> These are the most unreliable witnesses I have ever heard. Captain Hintze (Observation Officer) was biased, prejudiced and systematically hostile to everything which took place in this ship.
>
> The evidence of Travers (Second Officer) was of a most conflicting and lying character. In my view no jury of reasonably minded people would run the risk of accepting such evidence.

The actual ground for the magistrates' decision to stop the case at the close of the prosecution's evidence was their view that the Act of 1936 did not apply to Spanish coastwise trade, and the Government sought to appeal from this decision by way of "case stated." In some cases, "case stated" is a good way of getting a point of law decided. But in the present case, almost every imaginable defect and disadvantage seems to be present. In the first place such an appeal can only be brought if notice be served upon the respondent within seven days of the decision. The Gibraltar Government attempted to serve notice, but found that the respondent, Captain Scott, had already left Gibraltar, so that the appeal is presumably abortive. The Government should have accepted this position, and let the matter drop. Instead, it went on and got a "case stated" by the magistrates. Now, the "case stated" too must be served on the respondent, and this service can only be effected in Gibraltar, but the Government recently procured some person in England to visit Captain Scott at his home near Durham and there to serve the "case stated" upon him. This is obviously completely useless as a service of process in Gibraltar. One would have thought that here was yet one more imperative reason for letting the matter drop, but the Gibraltar Government is apparently intending to press on the appeal.

Captain Scott has already stood his trial in Gibraltar. The only witnesses against him on a vital point of the case have been described by one of the two magistrates in the terms of very strong condemnation quoted above. He has already incurred the very great expense of defending himself and of bringing a witness from Barcelona to prove that the most important part of the goods complained of had been put on board the ship in error, as they were really intended for, and were borne upon the manifest of, a Spanish vessel which was loaded in Barcelona at about the same time. The appeal will be brought in Gibraltar, 1,000 miles away from Captain Scott's home, and he is confronted with the alternative of either letting the matter go by default or of employing Counsel at considerable expense to represent him. The proceedings become more oppressive by the fact that the appeal will presumably have to come before the Chief Justice, who has already in effect decided the appeal in the Government's favour without hearing argument.

THE EBBW VALE AFFAIR

WHEN Messrs. Richard Thomas decided to build their great new steel plant at Ebbw Vale, rather than in Lincolnshire or some other relatively prosperous area, their decision was rightly acclaimed as a real contribution to the rehabilitation of one of the most seriously depressed industrial centres. Ebbw Vale was a derelict place: its once great steel works had been closed down, and it had been widely asserted that prosperity would never return to it, because any new plant would certainly be built nearer the coast, even if it were in South Wales at all, and probably not in South Wales, but somewhere better situated in relation to the supplies of domestic iron ore. For years argument went on—with one Government after another trying to persuade some group of profit-seeking capitalists to think well enough of Ebbw Vale's prospects to risk their money there; and finally, when the new tariff had shut out cheap imported steel and made the tinplate industry dependent on home-produced supplies, Messrs. Richard Thomas, the biggest firm in the tinplate trade, with large interests in Lincolnshire and elsewhere as well as in South Wales, were persuaded to make the venture.

It was known from the beginning that the capital required would be very large. A gigantic strip-mill on the American model is a very costly concern, remunerative only if its products can find an assured continuous market up to something approaching the full capacity for which it has been designed. Actually, the new mills at Ebbw Vale have cost a good deal more than was bargained for at the time when they were planned, partly because the difficulties of the site had not been fully appreciated in advance and partly because they have been built under conditions of steadily rising cost. If the works had been started earlier, so as to be built at the bottom of the depression, the additional sum now needed would not be so large as it is; but, as matters stand, the largest costs were incurred under the boom conditions of last year, and the production seems likely to begin at a time when markets are unfavourable.

Under these circumstances, additional money was needed to complete the scheme; but there was no disposition to provide this money under the ordinary conditions of the investment market. With a considerable amount already outstanding in debentures, and a prospect of declining demand, the regular investment agencies looked askance at the demands for more capital—even apart from the fact that rival producers of raw steel, tinplates and other competitive products, and those who finance them, were not at all eager to hasten the advent of a huge and powerful competitor, equipped to produce at low cost—on condition of being able to sell a very large output.

In these circumstances, the project was in danger of being held up. In fact, Richard Thomas's efforts to secure financial accommodation were being systematically thwarted in the City. But this could not be allowed; for there are powerful interests, including the Prudential, among the existing debenture-holders, and the Bank of England, practically representing the Government, has been from the outset morally, though not financially, committed to the scheme. Accordingly, after prolonged negotiations there emerged the "arrangement" recently announced in the press. The additional capital needed to finish the works is to be provided by the Bank of England through its subsidiary, the Bankers' Industrial Development Co., and by a consortium of the joint stock banks. The latter are to receive new debenture stock, with prior rights over the debentures already issued, and will be in the happy position of earning $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on what appears to be a practically safe short-period investment, to be repaid within 17 years at most, and convertible into equities if the works prospers—so that the bankers are very successfully having it both ways. The Bank of England is to be content with ordinary shares. The existing debenture holders are to get, in the form of a temporarily larger return, some compensation for giving up their prior rights; and the business is to come under the control in the last resort of a special board, presided over by the Governor of the Bank of England, but including representatives of the Prudential and the steel industry. What is practically more important, three directors from other steel companies—two of them rival producers—are to be added to the board of Richard Thomas and Co., which thus comes in effect under the control of its rivals, with the bankers in the background to enforce compliance by threatening to withdraw supplies.

Thus, in effect, the greatest concern in the tinplate trade passes into the bankers' hands. We have no knowledge of the negotiations by which the new arrangement was made, of the precise forces behind it, or of what Messrs. Thomas feel about the reward they are receiving for setting up their works in a depressed area. We have no knowledge of the policy which the new board is likely to follow, or of its exact relation to the close cartel, or combine, which nowadays dominates the production of raw steel. We do, however, remember somewhat vividly that, when the present tariff on raw steel was introduced, and the steel industry was in process of being reorganised into a sort of cartel under the auspices of the Government, Sir William Firth, the head of Richard Thomas and Co. was one of the principal critics of a scheme which he regarded as calculated to establish the dominance of the raw steel producers over the finishing trades. In face of his protest, the raw producers got their way; and it looks as if they are now, with the aid of the bankers, firmly in control at Ebbw Vale as well as in their own establishments.

For the plain fact is that the new Ebbw Vale works threatens the position and the profits of the rival producers of steel sheets, not only for tinplates but also for the motor industry and for many other uses—in building and furnishing, for example. Ebbw Vale's sheet and tinplate production, at full capacity, will be well over 60 per cent. of the total British output as it was in 1937. The most up-to-date and best-equipped plant in the world—the only one planned from start to finish as a new works using the latest processes—Ebbw Vale, if it were allowed to work to capacity, would be able to undercut all other producers with the greatest ease. Prices would come down with a run; and the other steel firms would not like that at all. In effect, it seems certain that what they, and the banks, have done is to make the finding of money for the completion of the scheme conditional on Messrs. Thomas agreeing not to capture their rivals' trade by bringing down prices, but to accept a quota arrangement which seems certain seriously to restrict the efficiency of the new plant.

The entire episode, however it may be interpreted, illustrates very clearly the disadvantages of the sort of "planning" to which industry has of late been increasingly subject. There was a great deal to be said in favour of building a big new steel works in South Wales, and at Ebbw Vale in particular, and Messrs. Richard Thomas deserve all credit for taking the risk. But the job ought to have been started sooner, and it ought to have been carried through without delay, and on an assured financial basis. It must be agreed that the creation of this monster new plant is a matter of concern to the rest of the steel industry; but it appears to us entirely illegitimate that stress of financial difficulties should be used as an opportunity for bringing the enterprise under the control of a consortium representing, primarily, financial and rival industrial interests. If we are to have planned development of industry, let us have it openly and outright, with all the cards on the table, and not indirectly, *via* the Bank of England and the joint stock banks, under conditions which make it impossible to say how far the Bank of England is acting in its own capacity, and how far on the Government's behalf.

To-day, we have in effect a situation in which the Government has conferred on a group of great steel producing concerns not only the advantage of a high tariff, but also virtually monopolistic powers. The tariff weapon has been used, and may at any time be used again, to aid these firms in their dealings with competitors abroad; and the sanction given, *via* the Import Duties Advisory Committee, to the steel reorganisation scheme puts the Government practically in the position of guarantor of the solvency of the industry. What the Government has not, and refuses to take, is the power to replan the industry as a whole from the standpoint of the public interest. Instead of this, we have piecemeal and irresponsible intervention, now by the I.D.A.C. and now by the Bank of England, with the Prudential Insurance Company and the joint stock bankers working in the background and one group of steel firms intent on preventing another from lowering prices by producing to capacity at lower cost. How much better would it have been, when the industry first got into serious difficulties, to nationalise it outright, and thus secure the power to replan and develop it as a coherent whole.

There is another aspect of the Ebbw Vale affair. As the new works gets near completion, South Wales is better able to estimate its economic effects. The building of it has given a good deal of employment; but it is so highly mechanised that the operation of it, when it is finished, will provide much less than was widely hoped when the project was set on foot. Moreover, for every man taken on at Ebbw Vale, a number now producing steel under less highly mechanised conditions in the Swansea area are likely to lose their jobs. This does not mean that the building of Ebbw Vale has been a mistake; for it is indispensable, if cheap raw steel is no longer allowed to be brought in from Belgium, that cheap steel should be produced at home, and only very high mechanisation can bring costs down to the required level. It is also indispensable that supplies of cheap, high-grade sheet should be made available for the motor industry, which has long been complaining bitterly about the cost and quality of the British product as compared with those of American sheet steel. But all this does mean that the erection of new factories of the most modern type will certainly not solve the problem of unemployment, even if the demand for steel is maintained at the highest conceivable level. Ebbw Vale will be somewhat better off, no doubt; but total unemployment is unlikely, in the short run, to be decreased.

We are very conscious that this article tells much less than the full story of Ebbw Vale, and it is possible that at some points in it our inferences and conclusions are at fault. These very errors and omissions, however, form part of our case. The proper conduct of the steel industry is a matter of vital public concern, not only to the people of South Wales and the other steel-producing areas, and to those engaged in the steel-consuming industries, but to the entire nation. This is so plainly recognised that, as everyone knows, the Government has been constantly concerning itself with the affairs of the industry ever since the last war and, to a greater extent, since the onset of the world depression. To-day there is the additional concern arising out of the heavy public expenditure upon armaments. Yet almost all the negotiations between the Government (or its representative, the Bank of England) and the steel industry have taken place in private, and, apart from the reports made by the Import Duties Advisory Committee, the public has been allowed to know practically nothing about them. Signor Mussolini recently called Great Britain a "plutodemocracy"; and the handling of the steel question, up to and including the Ebbw Vale episode, gives point to the taunt.

A LONDON DIARY

MR. CHAMBERLAIN used words about the Far East in his speech on foreign affairs last week which recalled to mind those that Sir Samuel Hoare used about the Spanish war at the beginning of Franco's revolt. He spoke of it as a war in which Britain could not intervene, but then went on to refer to the necessity of looking after British interests there and to the undesirability of lending money to the Chinese. Putting aside any notion of distinguishing between the aggressor and the victim of aggression, Mr. Chamberlain seems to follow Sir John Simon in assuming that British interests in the Far East are best served by keeping in with the Japanese. Technically, no doubt, the bankers may have told Mr. Chamberlain that to lend money to China is to run the risk of having to lend more to get the interest back on the last loan. In any case, if the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and firms like the Jardine Matheson Company had seen their future as being bound up with the Chinese the loan would have been forthcoming. The significance of the Government's refusal is that these dominant British interests in China are hoping for a patched up peace between Japan and Chinese capital, which means a split and possibly civil war in China, and Japanese control over chunks of Chinese territory, while certain specific British interests are guaranteed by the Japanese at least for a year or two. British capital does not look very far ahead in these days. But one might have hoped that the British Government would be more long-sighted. For in the longer run a Chinese victory is probable, while, if the Japanese do win, the one certainty is that British and other Western interests will be swept aside as ruthlessly as Chinese are bombed.

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I think it should be put on record that there is considerable doubt about the authenticity of the document which was published in all good faith by the *News Chronicle* the other day describing German plans in Portugal and summarising the helpless position of the British Empire at the end of the Spanish war if Franco wins. If the document was not actually a lecture by a German general, it was, as experts admit, a very fair and able summary of what German generals are saying and hoping to make true. This raises an important point for the anti-Fascist side. There is almost nothing that is too silly to be true and nothing too false to be believed and spread in the Fascist press. Then someone in one of the non-Fascist countries decides not to leave all the best propaganda to the devil and himself has a go at a little imitation Goebbels. But whereas Goebbels can publish lies every day and the German people never know the truth from falsehood, a forgery on the democratic side is soon discovered and given away by conscientious people with discreditable results. The moral? That democratic countries have so much on their side that they can stick to the truth, and that in the world to-day it is wise to scrutinise everything pretty carefully, lest we find ourselves tripped up again by another Ems telegram. Working rule: believe nothing that comes from the propaganda factories of Germany and Italy and only believe that which comes from the democratic countries when the evidence is good.

* * *

War breeds in our minds to-day something more disabling than fear—a moral horror of mass murder, a reasonable repulsion from sharing in an act of universal madness whose results can only be more madness and more horror. All around me I watch intelligent and kindly people adjusting their minds in various ways to the prospect of this horror. Many, unable to bear the burden of guilt involved in any share in this crazy politics, join the P.P.U. as complete pacifists. Last week thousands, protesting their refusal to fight and their demand for international reconciliation, joined in a march through Scotland and England and concluded with a demonstration in Hyde Park. Others, whose repulsion from war is no less strong, devote themselves to the task of becoming strong or of advocating strong policies, buoying themselves up on the old illusion that strong arms and collective opposition mean peace because, if you are strong, no one dares attack. Then there are those, perhaps the happiest, who forget their conflict by throwing themselves into some particular piece of work, the more dangerous the better, thereby proving that their horror of war is no cowardice. To me the most typical of such people, "intellectuals" often and exceptionally sensitive, is Ernest Hemingway, whose books show him above all wanting to be "tough," tough enough to convince even himself. One sees this all through the notes on the war in Spain which he has written down for the July issue of *Fact*

Here is the inescapable emphasis on the blood and the pain and destruction, told with the deliberate nonchalance of the man who is seeing these things every day, who is secretly shattered to the very soul by them, but who finds self-respect and even comfort in facing them in reality. Constantly to bear them in imagination is intolerable. I think Hemingway's is a good way out for the acutely sensitive man. I met him in Madrid some months ago. He had just come from the fighting. Not to miss a thing in this loathsome business—that it seemed to me was Hemingway's way out. To photograph the worst horrors, to justify nothing, but to record everything—Hemingway was making a film of the fighting at the time—and to bear witness to the heroism and endurance of men who fought to defend their liberties against the Fascists—here was a task which could satisfy and make one's prose cold and save one from screaming aloud on paper. The toughest fighter and the aggressively pacific pacifist may be very close to each other; both may gain their faith from their extreme sensitivity. The state of mind, not the choice of action, is what matters in the long run; the relapse into barbarism comes with the man who is made insensitive by training, the youth whose education has been based on an effort to eradicate the guilt and sensitivity to pain that are natural to the human animal, who is told that power and glory and strength justify murder and torture and who in the end comes to believe it.

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The railways, we all agree, do a big job of work over August Bank Holiday, and do it on the whole pretty well. Nevertheless, seeing that he knows by this time what to expect in the way of extra traffic, the managerial Homer does seem to nod more frequently than he need. As witness, these leaves from a correspondent's diary: "*Saturday:* Left Euston for Dumfries, 12.20 a.m. Heavy train of seventeen coaches, with one locomotive. Arrived Carlisle over two hours late, averaging under 35 m.p.h. on trip. Not good for night express carrying mails and newspapers. Attendant informed us that engine-driver had repeatedly requested additional locomotive. No spare engine apparently forthcoming. Faulty organisation, or economy? If latter, misplaced and false; for, though additional engine added at Carlisle by frugal Scots, train missed guaranteed connection at Dumfries, and expensive special had to be run to Stranraer, with handful of passengers. *Sunday:* Two visits to Dumfries (120 miles of motoring) on behalf of week-end hostess, to whom consigned by passenger train ex-Euston Saturday morning a present of a costly, perishable, peach-fed cooked ham. Sleeveless errands; ham not arrived. *Monday morning:* Further visit to Dumfries. No ham. Informed no parcel arrivals from South since Friday. Left instructions for return of ham to consignors, as now certainly unfit to eat. Vista of endless disputes, perhaps litigation. . . ." I daresay my friend does the L.M.S. injustice. There may be good explanations. But the making of a Bank Holiday omelette does seem to involve breaking a good many travelling eggs.

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For my own part I spent Bank Holiday motoring from Carlisle to London, with an American friend, on his first visit to England, as my passenger. To my surprise, the Great North Road was comparatively empty, and we made good progress. I saw no cases of flagrantly dangerous driving, though a good many instances of inconsiderate parking. As a trivial contribution to mass-observation, I noted, first, the practically complete absence of luxury cars on the road. (A generation ago at holiday times only the rich could afford to travel; but now the rich man is he who has a country house from which he need not move.) Secondly, I am driven to the conclusion that, next to the Norwegians, the English have become the slowest drivers in Europe. Is it the consequence of a national tendency towards slow reflexes, or has the average motorist begun to lose his nerve on our dangerously constructed highways? My day on Britain's premier road, A1, convinced me that none of the present patch-work improvements will serve. For three-quarters of its length, the route from Carlisle to London remains tortuous, perilously narrow, obstructed by built-up bottle-necks whose removal would be as costly as building a new highway avoiding towns and villages. Over long stretches the road degenerates into a country lane. My American friend on Monday was clearly impressed with my choice of route—a choice which he attributed to my desire to avoid holiday traffic. "How clever," he said, "to pick these by-roads for our journey." Poor A1!

* * *

As I came through the Barnet By-pass on the last lap of my journey, I was reminded of the eloquent and trenchant speech in the House the other day by Mr. H. G. Strauss, M.P. for Norwich. This by-pass, one of the few exits from London which has not yet been spoiled, is now seriously threatened. Mr. Strauss quoted a disquieting advertisement from the back page of the *Times*: "Build your factory near the greatest market in the country: London. One mile frontage to Barnet By-pass. Publicity on Britain's most important arterial road. . . . The Barnet By-pass at this part will be 140 feet wide, with a 120-feet wide boulevard on each side, making a total width of 380 feet." He complained bitterly that the Ministry of Health had done and was doing nothing to prevent this "destruction as usual." I am heartily with the Member for Norwich, too, in his protest at the ruin of a still greater amenity—the beauty of our sea coasts, which are being steadily and hideously beribboned. The spoliation of countryside and sea cliffs is not the work of the vulgar mob and philistine public authorities (though some of the rural district councils, it is true, are deplorable "planning authorities"). The real villains of the piece, as Mr. Strauss said, are the private speculative builders.

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An expert in educational psychology went out from England to a job in one of the British Dominions, with his wife and *enfant terrible* of a small daughter. They were devotees of the full-encouragement-of-personality school, no frustrations. At breakfast one morning the child pushed her cereal away, pettishly announcing that she did not want it and would not eat any of that breakfast. "Well, darling, what would you like?" A whimper: "I want a worm." Daddy, running true to form, goes into the garden, brings in a fat one, and lays it on her plate, "There you are, my dear." Indignant sobs: "But I want it cooked!" It is sent into the kitchen, rolled in batter, cooked, and brought back. Sobs again: "I want Daddy to have half!" Daddy divides the worm-pie, pulls himself together, and manages to get his portion down. This time, sobs and howls: "But that was the part *I* wanted!"

POLYCRITIC.

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to D. S. Bannister.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

Extracts should not be sent without their context. The article or passage should be sent in full with the proposed excerpt marked.

In such trying circumstances Mr. Hammersley is keeping his head admirably. At every meeting he is emphasising his anti-Fascist and anti-Communist views. "A man of moderation," he says, "remains a man of moderation; while an extremist finds it difficult to be anything but an extremist."—*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post.*

Secretary of good appearance and education for Specialist in St. John St.: salary 25*s.*-30*s.*—Advt. in *Manchester Guardian.*

In the royal archives at Windsor Castle there is a chart showing the descent of our royal family from David the shepherd king, in unbroken line. Since the Royal College of Heralds is responsible for its accuracy, its authenticity is beyond dispute.—Letter in the *Bulletin.*

It is a record Bank Holiday for marriage masquerading. All over Britain, in seaside hotels, in country inns, young lovers, posing as man and wife, are together.

Proof is in the record sales of sixpenny wedding rings—80 per cent. of the buyers being girls, most of them blushingly making all types of excuses about the purchase of a sixpenny " ticket " to bliss.

Comment of the manager of a chain jewellery store was : " The demand for wedding rings has been ten times greater this week than at any other time of the year. It is always the same at August Bank Holiday."—*Sunday Pictorial.*

The Air Minister wants it made clear that the Civil Air Guard is essentially a civil organisation. The only military obligation of those who belong to it will be that in the event of war they must offer their services to the R.A.F. or in any other direction concerned with aviation.—*News Chronicle.*

Because sweethearts in the audience made so much noise kissing and cuddling, a remodernised cinema here has included a Lovers' Corner to seclude the noisy ones from the rest of the audience.—*Daily Express.*

ROUMANIA ON THE FENCE

TO a foreign observer the changes of the last two years in Roumanian policy are bewildering and merit brief clarification. From the pro-Russian line of M. Titulescu the country passed to the Polish conception of neutrality ; switched back from there to the old *rapprochement* with France, whose technical and financial assistance it needs for rearmament ; then fell into the ideological camp of Germany, where it lay for the 44 days of the Goga regime ; finally—just in time to escape the German political combine—it took another hairpin bend away from the Goga policy, and is now drifting towards a goal which it would be difficult to define.

Threatened with being crushed by either Germany or Russia, Roumania is still trying to avoid the choice. While constantly on the look-out for possible tactical advantages, her main concern is to avert the danger of a foreign occupation against which her own forces would be powerless to defend her.

Distrust of Russia is deeply ingrained in the Roumanian mentality. The Tsarist Government treated the Roumanian principalities with a high hand. If it did not seize the territory it coveted, it was quite capable of fomenting internal trouble which it then exploited to its own advantage. After the Great War this perennial Muscovite interference took the form sometimes of Bolshevik propaganda among the masses, sometimes of nationalist agitation among the Russian population of Bessarabia. When the Roumanians reformed the calendar and established an independent national orthodox Church the Soviet atheists did not hesitate to pose as the champions of religious rights.

M. Titulescu, who negotiated the compromise over Bessarabia, fully realised that the frontier could not be defended. He was accordingly prepared to go to any lengths to gain Russian good will, even to meet her wishes regarding the passage of the Red Army when going to the aid of Czechoslovakia. He hoped that compliance with the reasonable requests of the Russian General Staff would induce the Soviet leaders to hand back Bessarabia when their soldiers returned from Central Europe. It was this policy, exceedingly unpopular in Roumania, which brought about M. Titulescu's downfall.

His successor hurried to Warsaw to try to revive the military alliance with Poland, but this did not succeed in calming Roumanian fears of a possible Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia. It was obvious that the Red Army, if forced to succour its ally, would use the shorter route through Roumania rather than attempt to cross Poland.

The solution envisaged by M. Goga was to bring Roumania frankly into the German camp. A tripartite military agreement was to be signed with Germany and Hungary, which would have enabled German troops to reach Roumania in the shortest time via Hungary, meet the Russian Army in Bessarabia, and throw it back across the Dniester. M. Goga was dismissed before the project could materialise.

What are the plans of the present Government ? It was hoped that the Czechoslovakian crisis would reveal them, but up to date is has failed to do so. Roumanian sympathies with Czechoslovakia are genuine and deep. There is a close technical collaboration between the two countries which has sometimes gone as far as financial assistance. Czechoslovakia, moreover, is the only Danubian country which imports Roumanian farm products. Like both her partners in the Little Entente, Roumania has German and Hungarian minorities, the Hungarian being the more numerous and dissatisfied of the two. She must evidently fear the repercussions on these people of any weakening in Prague towards the Czechoslovakian minorities.

And yet it is far from certain that Roumania would come to the help of Czechoslovakia in war. Except in the case of an aggression by Hungary, no undertaking exists to this end. There is, of course, the obligation under Article XVI of the Covenant, but that only comes into effect in the unlikely event of League unanimity. How Roumania would behave if free to take her own decision is impossible to predict and would evidently depend on the circumstances.

What is certain is that she would be faced with the alternative of siding with Germany or Russia. Neutrality in a Central European conflict would not be possible even for 24 hours. Present indications are that Roumania would choose the Russo-Czechoslovak group, if only because Russia is nearer. To oppose her with the help of Germany would mean handing over the Roumanian plain to become a battlefield for the two greatest armies in the world. It is true that an alliance with Russia would involve opening the frontier to Russian troops, but it is hoped they would hurry across Roumania and engage the Germans in Hungary, using Roumania as a war base. Though inconvenient enough, this is generally considered the lesser evil.

Even so there is considerable difference of opinion, which in the event of a conflict might well provoke an internal crisis. There is only one point on which the two main political forces of Roumania—namely, the present Government and the Iron Guards—are unanimous ; and that is the defence of the territorial integrity of the country. Otherwise they are bitterly divided on every question, and there is little chance of their ever agreeing as to the best method of defence.

The Iron Guards are not less anti-Bolshevik than the Nazis themselves. They would never consent to fight on Russia's side or against Germany. The apparent contradiction between their resolve to defend every square inch of Roumanian territory, and their sympathy for the chief exponent of frontier revision, is explained away by M. Goga and the Germanophiles with the argument that Germany does not support Hungarian revisionism against Roumania. These politicians are ready to throw Czechoslovakia to the wolves, since they have, so they claim, Berlin's assurance that the wolves are well trained and would not forget whom they are expected to bite and whom they must spare, even in the fiercest battle.

The problem has also an economic aspect which causes much concern to the present Government and to business circles. The industrial equipment of Roumania is to a large extent of German origin and a severance of the young Roumanian industry from German engineering plants has therefore become practically impossible.

On the other hand, the stability of Roumania's trading balance rests on three bulk commodities, namely, farm products, oil and lumber. But while Roumania oil can compete in quality with any, and Roumanian lumber is the best obtainable in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the average quality of farm products has yet to be improved before they can be placed on the world market.

Partly through lack of scientific methods, particularly in selecting and grading, partly through difficulties of transport, Roumanian cereals, eggs, poultry and fruit are still practically unknown abroad. England would never buy such products even at low prices. The only markets open to them are those of countries such as Germany, whose consumption is restricted by exchange and quota regulations, and whose public are accustomed to accept inferior articles of food without grumbling about their quality.

But while it is useful to Germany to obtain second-class products to feed her people, Roumania is not the only source of supply. Germany produces part of her own needs and she can also buy from other countries. She is thus in a position to put the screw on Roumania should the latter offend her or try to resist her political and economic influence.

Roumania cannot afford to do either, and for that reason she will never, unless there is a general conflagration, take an open stand against Germany. Whether in the long run this dependence will have a determining effect on her attitude in the event of a war remains to be seen. It is evidently what Germany hopes. J. F. KÖVÉR

ON WITH THE DANCE

I WARMLY sympathise with the Berkshire headmaster who has been receiving hundreds of abusive letters since he announced that he and his wife and two daughters were taking a car to the Rhineland and that his daughters, aged 19 and 11, were going to dance—apparently as professionals—in a German beer-garden. " I believe," wrote one correspondent, " it is because you like beer." That, one must agree, is a possible explanation, but it seems to me a very unlikely one. If the headmaster had an irresistible craving for beer, he would, I imagine, have saved the cost of the German trip and spent the money on stocking the school cellars with barrels in the spirit of the headmaster of Narkover. After all, there is very little difficulty in getting beer in England. There is a blank period in the afternoon during which one is forbidden to drink it in public houses, but a beer-drinker with even a minimum of foresight can provide for this and drink domestically till, at five or six o'clock, the law restores him his liberty. I doubt whether there is a single headmaster in England who has ever gone abroad for a holiday merely to escape from the oppression of the licensing laws.

Another correspondent, while imputing no motive to the headmaster, writes: " You and your daughters are going to the Devil." That is a more reasonable point of view. Many good men have associated dancing with the Devil, and many good men even in our own time have associated beer with the Devil. As a child, I confess, I looked with feelings of mingled awe and admiration on any man coming out of a public house. In my imagination, he was clothed at once in the badness and in the boldness of Cain. Even when he was sneaking out by a back door—and many of the public houses had back doors in my native city—he was a figure of Byronic daring venturing into the dark places of the earth at the risk of his immortal soul. Though I had often drunk diluted claret at my uncle's and had been given hot whisky-and-water by my nurse as a cure for toothache, I could not help thinking of a public house as a haunt of vice, and I often wondered what went on behind those banging doors. Many people who have never been in a public house still wonder. They should go in and see. If they have Tartarean imaginations, they will, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, be gravely disappointed.

There are, indeed, very few frequenters of public houses of whom you could say at a glance that they are going to the Devil. Most of them are behaving as innocently as if they were in a teashop. Some of them are merrier than if they were in a teashop, and, as time goes on, an occasional one of them may be more crabbed and more demonstrative of his crabbedness. But one of the chief characteristics of an ordinary public house is its lamb-like innocence. People even seem to like each other better in public houses, just as they do at picnics and Sunday-school outings. Allowing for all those who like liquor too well, we may reasonably look on the public house as a generous contributor to the good nature of, at least, the male sex. Women, perhaps, do not need it so much, for, as a lay philosopher once said to me: " Every woman is born at par: every man is born two double whiskies-and-soda below par." The generalisation is too sweeping, as the notorious case of Mr. Shaw is alone sufficient to prove; but it is true that the English public house at its best has been in the main a masculine institution, responding to masculine needs. It is, perhaps, to be counted for virtue to the Continental café that women and children are also at home in it. This is equally true, I imagine—for I have never been in Germany—of the German beer-garden. You never know, I agree, where the Devil will insinuate himself: he made his first appearance in a garden, so that it is just possible that he may be found in a beer-garden. I do not think, however, that the headmaster and his family are taking an undue risk. There are worse places in Germany than beer-gardens.

Misdirected as I think the abuse of the headmaster has been, however, I am not sure that he has not gone a little too far in his attempt to turn the tables on his critics. " Live more freely and widely," he tells them, " be citizens of the world, is my advice to all those who have these left-on-the-shelf ideas." So far his advice is unexceptionable, but doubt begins to creep in when he goes on: " I believe that, if we all danced in beer-gardens—which, alas, for most of us is a physical impossibility—fear, distrust and cowardice would disappear between nation and nation." It would be interesting to have the opinions of Lord Cecil and Mr. Gilbert Murray on this proposed remedy for the present international unrest. If the headmaster is right, then all that Lord Cecil and Mr. Murray have to do is to abandon political propaganda and to organise a vast scheme for dancing in beer-gardens all over Europe. The League of Nations might offer a prize of £1,000 for the best song-and-dance, to be entitled " The Geneva Walk," to supplement " The Lambeth Walk." If the tune were catchy enough, it is possible that before long we might see Herr Hitler, General Goering and Dr. Goebbels all dancing to it and gliding unresistingly along the paths of peace. M. Stalin and M. Litvinov, captured by its swing, might forget their quarrel with M. Trotsky and invite him enthusiastically to come back and show a leg.

On the other hand, the history of dancing does not justify us in regarding dancing as an infallible instrument of peace. No one who has seen the Edgar Wallace film, *Sanders of the River*, can think of the dance exhibited there as an appropriate recreation for members of the League of Nations Union. It was all, so far as I can remember, " Slay! Kill!" and that sort of thing. The war-dance, indeed, seems to be a much more ancient institution than the peace-dance, and, as the taste for the primitive has lately been on the increase, an epidemic of dancing in Europe might easily degenerate into an orgy of militarist contortions modelled on the amusements of Equatorial Africa. That dancing is not necessarily pacific is shown by the fact that in their dances the native women of Tasmania describe not only their " clamber for the opossum, diving for shell-fish, digging for roots and nursing children," but " quarrelling with husbands." If with husbands, why not with foreigners? That is the sort of dance that is in danger of becoming popular in Europe—a modern adaptation of the devil dance.

I am sorry to differ from the headmaster, who is obviously an idealist; but his scheme for world-peace seems to me to have as little basis in reality as that of the lady who said a few years ago that international bridge contests would do more than anything else to promote peace among the nations. It was a natural enough opinion for an enthusiastic card-player to hold, but I have never seen any evidence that nations that play games with each other love each other more than nations that don't. There were once great hopes that the Olympic Games would convert the world into one vast, good-natured sporting-club with " Play the game!" and " May the best man win!" for its mottoes. But, instead of this, we had accusations of unsportsmanlike behaviour, recriminations and even bitings. There was much besides, of course, but it must be admitted that the nations to-day do not seem to love each other much more than they did before the Olympic Games started. Even in the comparatively calm world of cricket we have seen Englishmen and Australians shrieking at each other across the Equator in a way that made many people wonder whether cricket was a game or a form of inter-tribal warfare. In South America international football matches have ended in gun-battles and bloodshed. I should like to think that international sport made countries more tolerant of each other, and it may yet do so; but in the present state of the world I would not trust the countries of Europe to keep their tempers in an international net-ball tournament.

Hence let us continue to play and watch games and to dance in beer-gardens; but let us not indulge in vain dreams that, if we do so, fear, distrust and cowardice will "disappear between nation and nation." They won't. There is a way of abolishing these things, but I cannot at the moment think what it is. Y. Y.

Correspondence

THE HARRIS-WILDE MEMOIR

SIR,—Mr. Raymond Mortimer, whose industry in counting 8,000 words fills me with awe, has not pushed his detective research far enough. In 1925 Harris, finding that he had been humbugged by Wilde and Ross, wrote a new preface in which he withdrew all the statements into which he had been misled by them.

This preface was in Harris's noblest style; and its withdrawals were ungrudging and complete. But what he should have done was to clean up the text of the book and publish it without its mistakes.

This is what I have done for him.

The preface was published by the Fortune Press in 1925, in a limited edition which Mr. Mortimer may consult if he is sufficiently interested in the book's history.

The contradiction which bothers him does not really exist. It was Robert Ross, it seems, who incited Wilde to prosecute the mad Marquess. When this piece of mischief was irremediable Lord Alfred Douglas offered to go into the witness box and smash his unvenerable father to atoms for Wilde's sake. It is a pity the offer was funked by Wilde's counsel; for Douglas was a first-rate fighting witness, and Wilde, like Whistler, a desperately bad one. In the final issue Queensberry had all the sympathy; and the court did its worst to Wilde.

I am sorry my account of Ross strikes Mr. Mortimer as "insulting." I did not belong to Ross's set; but I was on pleasant speaking terms with him in his later years; and I tried to pass over his enormities as lightly as possible. If Mr. Mortimer will hunt up the Fortune Press volume he will appreciate my friendly moderation. G. BERNARD SHAW

4 Whitehall Court,
London, S.W.1.

SIR,—Referring to what Mr. Raymond Mortimer says in your current issue about the question of responsibility for advising Wilde to take action against my father, will you allow me to quote as follows from my ***Autobiography*** (1929)?

> As a matter of fact, Robert Ross was at the time Wilde's adviser in the matter. It was Ross who induced Wilde to go to his (Ross's) solicitor, Mr. Humphreys . . . I mention all this not because I wish to evade responsibility for advising Oscar to proceed against my father—as I have already explained, I had advised him to do it long before—but it is important to record the fact that directly Oscar told me he had got a warrant for my father's arrest, and that his solicitor was Humphreys, I said: "Why on earth didn't you go to George Lewis?"

The point is, of course, that if he had gone to George Lewis the action against my father would never have been started. Mr. Mortimer says that most of the passages omitted from the present edition represented me in an unfavourable light, and most of the newer passages are very friendly to me. May I point out that if Mr. Shaw had used Harris's own words of retractation, apology, and even of eulogy, from his "New Preface" published in 1925, the favourable change in regard to me would have been even more marked? Mr. Shaw told me in a letter a few days ago that he had not read Harris's 1925 "Preface." I was able to assure him that he *had* read it and that he had written to me about it in 1931, but by this time the present book was already published. Mr. Shaw had forgotten all about the 1925 preface. As to Robert Ross; again, if the Harris 1925 preface had been quoted its condemnation of him would be even more severe than that which Mr. Mortimer complains of in Mr. Shaw's preface. Harris's method in that preface was to attribute all the libels on me in the book to the "malignity of Robert Ross and Wilde himself." Mr. Shaw has left intact Harris's account of the story of Ross descending into the grave and reverently removing Wilde's body with his own hands when it was transferred from the cemetery at Bayeux to Père Lachaix.

This is what Harris wrote in 1925 about this incident which he also says was doubted by Reginald Turner:

> A few days later Coleridge Kennard came to lunch with me in Nice, and, as soon as I asked him, he told me that Ross's story was mere fiction; he did not go into the grave or move the body with his own hands: he left all that to the professional gravediggers

Now let me add something of my own to this which leaves the whole question, in its relation to Ross, open once more, and which merely shows that Harris lied all the time consistently whether he was abusing me or "defending" me. Coleridge Kennard, who is a very old friend of mine, told me that he was not present at the cemetery when Oscar's body was removed and that he never said a word about the matter to Harris when he met him at Nice!

The only safe line to take with Harris is to disbelieve everything he says unless it is corroborated by independent witnesses or documents (provided that they are not forged by Harris himself).

1 St. Ann's Court, ALFRED DOUGLAS
Hove 2, Sussex.

[Mr. Mortimer writes: None of my remarks in any way reflected upon Lord Alfred Douglas. I criticised Harris's truthfulness, the preface and the editing of the book. In answer to Mr. Shaw's letter I have three comments to make. (1) It is true that in the New Preface published by the Fortune Press (which I had not read and which is not mentioned anywhere in the book I was reviewing) Harris admitted that a number of the statements in his American *Oscar Wilde* were false, but he refused (in his noblest style?) to alter the text, whereupon Lord Alfred Douglas very comprehensibly broke off all relations with him. Mr. Shaw in "cleaning up" the text, has inserted a number of remarks, many of which are indubitably true, but which come from Mr. Shaw's pen not Frank Harris's. He even writes into Wilde's conversation a statement which is true in itself but which (as far as we have any evidence) is the opposite of what Wilde was saying at the time. This seems to me a falsification of history which deserves attention. (2) Mr. Shaw said that Ross persuaded Wilde to prosecute Lord Queensberry "without consulting Lord Alfred"—a statement which I found improbable. And Lord Alfred explains that from the first he had urged the prosecution. (3) I never met Robert Ross, and have no first-hand knowledge of his character. But I know some of his many friends, who liked him, not as Mr. Shaw suggests because he was "so obliging and efficient in his business as an art-dealer," or because he was "so pathetically grateful that they did not cut him dead," but because they found him witty, kind-hearted, highly cultivated, and altogether excellent company.—ED., *N. S. & N.*]

"BACK TO THE LAND"

SIR,—The very valuable article by Mr. Easterbrook on "The Land" in your issue of July 16 draws attention to a problem becoming increasingly vital. The "living earth" as a farmer friend terms it is so little understood by the majority of people, that any attempt to introduce the subject in quarters where, frequently, little consideration is given to the production of the bread that perisheth, is welcome; and it is to be hoped that your readers will study this and the articles that are to follow.

It is, of course, impossible in presenting a general picture of the situation, as the writer attempts to do, to fill in all the detail, but I am puzzled to understand what is meant by this paragraph: "It has been estimated that in 1934 we imported 9,875,000 tons of feeding stuffs and fertilisers compared with an agricultural output of 9,863,000 tons."

Presumably the inference is that we imported that year 9,875,000 tons of feeding stuffs and fertilisers whilst our own soil produced only 9,863,000 tons of these. I note Mr. Easterbrook gives it as an estimate, and it would be interesting to know by whom and on what basis the estimate was made. If the first figure represents total imports, considerable allowance should be made for fertilisers used in market gardening, horticulture, golf courses, etc., and which never finds its way to the farm. But the second figure, if it represents what I suppose, is hardly credible. Surely the million acres or so of root crops would alone produce more than this tonnage of feeding stuff not to mention corn, hay, straw and the greatest of all, the green grass and herbage consumed by cattle and sheep on the 15 million acres of grass land. Perhaps Mr. Easterbrook will explain.

4 Leyburn Road, Dover. G. DOUGLAS CLARK

[Mr. Easterbrook writes: I agree with Mr. Douglas Clark that this is not a very satisfactory estimate. It was given by Mr. John Parker, M.P., in a letter published in the *Times* last February, but he did not enlarge upon how he made it up. Presumably it only takes into account the finished products of our farms, for our production of roots alone came to 9 million tons in 1935. Perhaps a better idea of our increasing dependence upon imported feeding stuffs, even in the past six years, may be obtained from the following figures quoted from the official Agricultural Market Report (certain categories only).

Imports of Feeding Stuffs (tons): 971,000 in 1931. 1,600,000 in 1937. Our livestock population varied as follows:—

	1931	1937
Cows in milk ..	.. 2,389,313	2,581,000
Pigs ..	.. 2,945,211	3,874,300
Sheep ..	.. 25,580,022	24,686,300
Poultry ..	.. 59,641,755	59,855,000

ED., *N.S. & N.*]

NATIVE LABOUR

SIR,—It was in Northern not Southern Rhodesia that I said labourers on tobacco plantations were paid 5s. to 8s. a month. These figures were quoted from Sir Alan Pim's report, that was published a few months ago. No doubt Mr. Farmer is correct in asserting that higher rates prevail in Southern Rhodesia. His figures prove that even there wage rates are only a third of those which, in Jamaica, produced the disturbances, which was just my point. NORMAN LEYS

"JOHNSONIAN GLEANINGS"

SIR,—In the preface of Part VIII of my *Johnsonian Gleanings*, less than a year ago, I explained that Part IX would be the last of this series in which fresh evidence could be printed, as Part X is to be devoted to a straight narrative of Johnson's life down to 1740, incorporating all the relevant results of my researches, while Part XI will be a complete index to the whole.

May I crave a little of your space in which to appeal to all those who can furnish me with any new information, or with any corrections, however slight, in connection with what has already been printed, to communicate with me as soon as possible, so that all such additions and corrections may be included in Part IX and thus come within the scope of the consolidated index? This appeal also applies to the Johnsonian portion of the parent work, *The Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, issued in 1906. ALEYN LYELL READE

Treleavan House,
Blundellsands, Nr. Liverpool.

THE L.C.C. AND TAXATION OF SITE VALUES

SIR,—It is evident from Mr. Herbert Morrison's speech last week that the L.C.C. are serious in their intention to achieve the above object. But the Bill cannot be metropolitan only, it must be national. If the scheme is good for London it is equally good for Manchester.

Site values are now rated. Rent, which is the basis of rateable value, is interest upon the cost of both building and site.

A preliminary operation would be the separate valuation of sites and the number of objections would be doubled. The costs of these would be heavy, but perhaps not fatal.

There is "a more excellent way." Site value taxation in any case is not a complete remedy. It would be only a very partial arrest of the unearned increment which finds its way into private pockets, and which handicaps or prevents every scheme promoted for the public good.

There is no just and effective way of securing this except by State ownership of all land. After the payment of annuities for a reasonable term, the whole of the collectively earned increment would be used for national purposes.

This is the declared policy of the Opposition when they come into power.

The ascertainment of site values might facilitate this operation. They would give a basis for compensation.

38 Moreland Court, N.W.2. A. W. CRAMPTON, F.S.I.

RURAL HOUSING

SIR,—Our Minister of Health—good luck to him!—is anxious that Rural District Councils shall make the utmost use of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938, to raise the standard of rural housing; but unfortunately for him the administration of this Act is in the hands of Rural District Councils, which are largely composed, or strongly representative of, rural landlords.

My experience is that many farmers care less about the housing conditions of their workers than they do about their cattle, and that the chief reason for providing a house is that it keeps the farm worker under the thumb of the employer.

Threat of demolition of this class of cottage by the local sanitary inspector will be strongly opposed by represented interests on the local council. Imagine the position of this officer. If he makes unfavourable reports upon property owned by councillors or their friends he will find himself in disfavour and can say good-bye to any chance of increase of salary, however well he performs his duties. RURAL SANITARY INSPECTOR

ORCHIDS

SIR,—I was particularly interested to read Miss V. Sackville-West's notes on the native orchids, in your issue for July 23rd, as I happen to be engaged at the moment in writing a book on the subject. For this purpose, I am especially anxious for news of some of the rarer species, and their recent appearances. May I, therefore, take this opportunity of asking any Orchidophiles among your readers, who may have been lucky during the last few years, to communicate with me at the address below?

I am not surprised that Miss Sackville-West has been unsuccessful in her quest for the "Military"; it is to be feared that this charming orchid has (as Miss Sackville-West infers) gone the way of scarlet and pipeclay, Ouida's guardsmen, and all the other more romantic appurtenances of soldiering. A near relation of the Military, however, the Lady Orchid (*Orchis purpurea*) still survives—a kind of abandoned *vivandière* of the lost battalion—in certain Kentish woods. Nor is the discovery of the "Lizard," as Miss Sackville-West laments, beyond all reasonable dreams—though it is a capricious plant, often deserting its traditional habitats for years at a stretch. I have not found it since 1926, but others have been luckier than I. Like many other species, though, it is probably doomed, alas! by the advance of Jerry the Builder and the colonising hordes of Metroland.

Ivy Cottage, B. JOCELYN BROOKE
Bishopsbourne, Nr. Canterbury.

THE MATRIMONIAL CAUSES ACT, 1937

SIR,—May I draw your readers' attention to a flaw which has been discovered in the recent Matrimonial Act?

Clause 2 (*b*) of the Act states that a petition for divorce may be presented by Husband or Wife on the ground that the respondent has deserted the petitioner without cause for a period of at least three years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition.

As is well known, poor people often resort to the Police Court to obtain an order on the grounds of desertion. This procedure is under the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1895. After hearing such Summons the Court may grant what is known as a Maintenance Order, or a Separation Order. Both Orders compel the wrongdoer to pay a weekly sum for the support of the Applicant and his or her children. A Separation Order, however, differs from a Maintenance Order in that it contains what is called a "non-cohabitation clause" which orders the Applicant and the Respondent to live apart from each other. The fact that this clause is inserted is believed to put an end to the desertion, since the parties are thenceforth living apart by Order of the Court.

In a recent case in which I appeared for the Wife, and which was the first of its kind in Manchester, a Separation Order (i.e. an Order containing a non-cohabitation clause) had been made as long ago as 1924, and the parties had lived apart since that date. Yet, since desertion only started a month before the Order was made, and the Order ended the desertion, the Wife had no grounds on which to take divorce proceedings. An application to the Court to strike out this clause was successful, but a further three years must elapse before there is sufficient desertion for divorce proceedings.

The same printed form of Order is always used, whether or not the Order made is a Separation or a Maintenance Order, and the clause in question may or may not be struck out at the time of the making of the Order without any real consideration having been given by the Justices as to the desirability of retaining or removing the non-cohabitation clause. Yet the existence of this clause not only holds up divorce proceedings for a further three years, but also necessitates an application to Court to vary the Order.

Although the application in question was the first one to be made in Manchester, the Poor Persons Committee in Manchester has already found in several instances that such a clause prevents the issue of divorce proceedings. It seems absurd that such a small point can cause this delay and injustice. A simple amendment to the Matrimonial Causes Act could put right this unfortunate state of affairs. Even people who regret that the grounds of divorce have been extended must at least admit that, if they are to be extended, they should not permit one person to be able to obtain a divorce and prevent another from doing so on a mere legal technicality. J. E. ALLEN-JONES

30 St. Ann Street, Manchester.

We are very glad to acknowledge the following sums received for Spanish Relief: Anon. (£500); C. S. Bennett (15s.); L. T. Freeman (5s.).

Miscellany

NATIONAL THEATRES

As I stood some months ago on the cleared South Kensington site of the National Theatre and saw Sir Robert Vansittart present Mr. Bernard Shaw with a sod taken from that boarded enclosure and hand over the deeds representing the purchase of the land, which has cost the National Shakespeare Memorial Committee £70,000 of its present fund of about £150,000, I thought to myself that whatever reasonable doubts one might have about the projected National Theatre it was too late now to do anything but try to assist the scheme to its best possible functioning.

It is a well-known but none the less grievous fact that public committees engaged on the forwarding of such schemes of national cultural interest generally attract some of the dullest and most conventional minds in the country. Much of the opposition to the idea of a National Theatre comes from the not altogether unfounded belief that every jackass and portentous dullard will have camped on the spot and staked his claim before the foundation stone is even quarried. In part this characteristic is inseparable from the committee system and the necessity of procuring a large number of gilded or partially gilded names thereon in order to impress the community with the respectability and safety of the whole concern. I wish to make it clear that I would hesitate to assert that the aforesaid and stigmatised dullards and boneheads are all so by nature. Not at all! But they become so by virtue of being on a large well-meaning committee. By the time that men arrive at the committee stage of their lives their native zest has generally left them—sometimes temporarily, sometimes for good. Not only that, but all schemes that are avowedly for the benefit of humanity invariably attract the wrong sort of people for artistic enterprise. Humanity is a good deal tougher and more complex than its improvers imagine, and when it comes to artistic matters one honest sceptic who loves his art is worth hundreds of the vague betterers of humanity whose high cultural aims are often used to conceal very poor artistic means.

In all such matters of social interest it is extremely difficult to ascertain facts. The majority are only concerned with making partisan points on one side or another. I am writing this article in order to disinter a few facts. The first thing that we ought to know concerns the site itself. As it is, people ignorantly denounce or extol this Cromwell Road site. Let me examine it dispassionately. As far as position goes—that is, away from Piccadilly Circus and theatre-land generally—it is excellent and could hardly be bettered, for a National Theatre does not need a commercially convenient site. The fact that it is in the centre of museum-land (including the Royal College of Art, the Royal College of Music and the Royal College of Science among the "museums") ought to be in its favour, but has been the subject of many cheap jokes. If these jokes have any point it is only in so far as the great Schools of Music, Art and Science in that vicinity are complete failures and do not do what they are supposed to do. If this is true it is only a criticism of their present management which should then be changed.

The actual site, therefore, is to all impartial criticism admirable. What about the size? Now here is where we are completely in the dark. We are told that the chief architect is to be Sir Edwin Lutyens, who is contributing his services as a donation. Mr. Bernard Shaw in his site-inaugurating speech threw a few heavy bouquets at Sir Edwin, one of which was by no means a harmless missile. We are supposed to feel that with Sir Edwin Lutyens we are safe from the danger of seeing upon this site an architectural monstrosity or a building that will look like the final mausoleum wherein English drama may sleep for all time. But is it true that we are safe with Sir Edwin? We certainly are safer with a single proved architect of any capacity in charge than with a committee, but no architect can contrive a decent building except to fulfil a clearly conceived function. Now, we are entitled to ask what function the Committee have in mind? What is to be the size of the building and its seating capacity? That is the first question to be asked. When Mr. Harley Granville-Barker was the presiding spirit in the preliminary manoeuvres to bring about the present situation he was distinctly in favour of our National Theatre having a double theatre under one roof, a large and a small auditorium, as they have in some German cities. With this plan it was my hope that we might have grand opera in the big house and Mozart, Rossini, and Gilbert and Sullivan, etc., in the small house, or spectacular and large-scale drama in the great auditorium and comedy and intimate drama (such as the plays of Tchehov) in the smaller auditorium. By this means something would always be happening in the National Theatre, even if half the company were out touring, which, in itself, was a desirable activity.

There is no reason why one of these auditoriums should not be placed above the other if the site is not large enough to place them side by side. But I have heard it rumoured that it is impossible to excavate deeply at this site because there is a railway underneath. Is this true? Once again the subscribing public ought to know. Another important matter is that the theatre should include a restaurant large enough to contain the whole audience—just as Mr. Christie's restaurants are at Glyndebourne. This is particularly important, considering the locality of the site, which is removed from all the principal refreshment centres. It would, however, be important in any case, since it ought to be the object of the management to induce the public to make the National Theatre a natural rendezvous where they may meet their friends to dine or drink and go into the theatre or not as they please. In planning the auditorium it is important that the architect should bear one or two practical points in mind. A theatre should have a very large and comfortable foyer open to all parts, or it should have easy and direct access from all parts into its main capacious restaurant. One of the main purposes of going outside the restricted West End theatre area is to secure space to obtain these essential amenities of a theatre—amenities such as all German theatres possess but which rackrents and the ridiculous centralisation of the theatres in London absolutely prohibits. In my opinion there is not a single theatre in the West End of London which is fit for civilised people to enter. Then are we to have these essential amenities in our National Theatre or not? Which means now: Is the present site at South Kensington adequate? Because if it is not the Committee ought to sell it (which they could easily do at a profit) and buy another.

As for the crying need of a National Theatre there can be no question. We are not to assume that a National Theatre is going to help living dramatic genius. Of course it is not. Such a thing is impossible in the very nature of the world. But what a National Theatre can and must do is to present the great drama that already exists and has been recognised to the public at reasonable prices and as efficiently as possible. It is nonsense to say this cannot be done, and if anybody asks me who is there who could ably and fruitfully direct a National Theatre now that Mr. Granville-Barker has turned into a Parisian I will answer, Mr. John Gielgud, who is at present forced for commercial reasons to abandon every now and then his more ambitious efforts on behalf of dramatic art.

W. J. TURNER

SUNDAY MORNING AT RANDFONTEIN

IN the vast square of the "Y" compound the crowds were gathering, the so-called white coloured people, and the so-called black; in reality, every shade of pink, grey, cream, purple, beige, coffee and chocolate coloured skin, but not nearly as many "white" people as I had expected. The white South African is perhaps tired of these dances, or perhaps he has never seen them and he does not want to see them. The dance was supposed to begin at half-past ten in the morning, but what amateur performance, in any part of the world, has ever begun when it was supposed to? African natives are, of course, just like other people, and the dance did not actually start until half an hour later. The onlookers, the two rows of Europeans, and a large crowd of natives standing behind, waited in the compound at the Randfontein gold mine, the largest gold mine in the world. The square was partly bordered by eucalyptus trees, tall almost as ship's masts, with their thin, half-peeled white and fawn trunks like the hide of some beautiful wild animal. A strong wind was blowing and their lanky branches waved and threw themselves in the air as if they wished to escape from the trunks and fly away. The ground of the compound was of flattened red earth, and the shadows of the trees moved about restlessly on it, and the shadows of the huge clouds rolling along in the fierce blue sky, so deeply blue that it might be the epitome of all blue skies, moved swiftly over it too. Everything was fluid, moving, swaying, tossing, dancing.

Under the trees were the musicians, the drums standing behind, and the native piano players sitting in front; but the pianos, more like zithers, were played with hammers held in the hands. The player in the middle of the row was usually the leader and acted as a kind of conductor. When I saw the dance he played a few notes, sometimes quite a long solo and then, at his signal, all joined in. As a solo instrument the piano has a sound deliciously liquid, like milk pouring into a churn, but when the whole band plays it is stirring, and the rhythm of the drums gave it, to me, an ecstatic effect. Jazz may have grown out of it, but it is unlike jazz. It has a more purposive sound, it has not been vulgarised. It has its own inspiration. If this music expresses the native African mind, then it is a mind full of energy, of vigour, of enthusiasm, and of delight.

We listened to the band for a short time, and then the dancers who had been gathering together in the background all marched on to the middle of the square, about fifty in number. In front of the band was placed a little drum, and behind it stood three or four tall and slim young men with bright coloured ribbons and tassels round their heads and squares of yellow, pink or white silk tied round their waists. These men represented the women dancers, as there are no women in a mine compound. Facing them were the two rows of male dancers. The first team was not considered the better. The crack team, from the Rose Deep Mine, came on later. But I liked the inferior team, for they were not all dressed alike as were the better dancers, whose clothes had probably been given them by the Rose Deep mineowners. The inferior dancers all wore sleeveless vests, and all manner of oddments for the little skirt or cloth tied round their waists. Hanging down behind was the skin of some animal, jackal or monkey probably, and black and white tails hung round their waists in a fringe. On their heads many wore bright balls of wool, red and blue, fastened on by a band round the forehead. The merry looking native at one end of the row was the jester. There is usually the "funny man" of the dance, who imitates and mocks at the leader, and can do the most elaborate contortions with his body. Our jester wore an old European cloth cap, with a large peak, stuck on one side of his head; but he was sophisticated and knew that he looked funny. Some of the others did not.

They all carried shields of black cowhide laced down the front with bands of white. During the dance they banged these down on the ground with terrific thuds and waved their long wooden spears and threw them high in the air. The dancers began by slight movements, swaying and moving their shoulders and hips rhythmically to that dominating music. Then one of the men who represented a girl stepped out in front of the little drum and did a few steps, twisting his body round and sticking out first one hip and then the other, and then all the "girls" joined in, dancing quickly, making feminine gestures with their legs and arms. Then one of the men danced out from the line and leaped wildly in the air, nearly as high as Nijinsky used to leap, shouting and waving his shield and his spear, and flinging his arms and his legs high and wide. Sometimes he looked fierce, sometimes joyous, sometimes he smiled so that his teeth caught the dazzling African sun. Then the whole two rows of men shouted and swayed and leaped as the drums and the pianos marched together in one overpoweringly strong and compelling rhythm. They went on dancing, playing, shouting and banging their shields on the baked earth for about an hour, only pausing when one of them jumped out in front of the line and did a solo, while occasionally a man would come out of the crowd of onlookers and give them water to drink from an enormous glass bottle, holding it up to their mouths. Then they would all begin dancing and stamping and shouting again, and as they leaped and came down the hard red earth of the compound shook under the impact of their hundred bare feet.

Then suddenly they all crouched down, and swayed slightly sideways, their chins touching their knees. They were representing their work in the mines, and they flung out their arms from side to side to show how they flung out the rock and the gold quartz. Now they lived again their underground lives, and now they could get rid of all that repressed crowded life of the working week. They expressed all their feelings in these dances. They worked off their joys, their hatreds, their rebellions, their amusements, and their fun, in these Sunday morning dances, which go on for four or five hours, and which the mine owners encourage as a safety valve. They give them clothes and pay for tuners to keep the instruments in good order. One of the managers said to me regretfully that these dances had lost some of their more primitive features, and that they were representing their daily life instead. He wanted to preserve them as museum pieces, interesting anthropological specimens. But I would rather see them the living, growing things that they are. One does not want mummified dances, kept carefully in their grave clothes. These dancers are not only asking their grandparents in the far-away villages what steps they did. They are thinking out their own steps and contortions to express their own cramped, hard work in the thick darkness below, and their own repressed sex life, without women living naturally round them. These are changing dances, performed by living men, criticised and praised by the crowd of spectators who stood all round the Square and who occasionally shouted out comments, or burst into laughter.

The onlookers were of many nations. On the wooden benches in front sat Canadians, French, Dutch, English and Americans, and behind were a few mine officials, the managers, the technical experts, some nurses and doctors from the mine hospital, in their starched clothes, shining in the hard, thin light; and then the natives, many of them in their Sunday clothes, like good Europeans, in suits of khaki-coloured drill. There were Basutos in their gorgeous blankets of vivid colours, like African flowers, startling pink and red, and black with white patterns, and white with black patterns, strange designs which they say are tigers, or trees, or crocodiles, though they did not look like these to me. And some years, crocodiles are all the fashion, and the next year, trees may be the things to wear. And there were other natives who had no Sunday clothes, and wore odd rags, remnants of a white man's dress, and old felt hats on their heads with the crowns pushed up, and one at least was in the dress of the Salvation Army. These all stood round in the sun, looking over the heads of the Europeans, or they gathered under the shade of the eucalyptus trees, or moved about under the tossing branches; for nothing was still. The monstrous clouds rolled over the sky, the tall trees flung their boughs and shook their desiccated leaves gracefully, like the thin men who were the women. The dancers leaped and swayed as the cloud shadows passed over them, the bandsmen moved with the rhythm of their music.

Sunday morning at Randfontein was a homage to the exciting and entrancing movements of nature, and of men.

THEODOSIA LLOYD.

FALL OF A CITY

ALL the posters on the walls,
All the leaflets in the streets,
Are mutilated, destroyed or run in rain,
Their words blotted out with tears,
Skins peeling from their bodies
In the victorious hurricane.

All the names of heroes in the hall,
Where the feet thundered and the bronze throats roared,
Fox and *Lorca* claimed as history on the walls,
Are now angrily deleted,
Or to dust surrender their dust,
From golden praise excluded.

All the badges and salutes
Torn from lapels and from hands
Are thrown away with human sacks they wore,
Or to the deepest bed of mind
They are washed over with a smile
Which launches the victors when they win.

All the lessons learned, unlearnt;
The young, who learned to read, now blind
Their eyes with an archaic film;
The peasant relapses to a stumbling tune
Following the donkey bray—
These only remember to forget.

But somewhere some word presses
In the high shelf of a skull, and in some corner
Of an irrefragable eye,
Some old man's memory jumps to a child—
Spark from the days of potency:
And the child hoards it like a wicked toy.

STEPHEN SPENDER

LANDOR AT SEA

I STROVE with none, for none was worth my strife;
Reason I loved, and, next to Reason, Doubt;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
And put it out.

E. M. F.

AT THE SHAW SPA

IT is no longer a case of the Old Firm, the Tried and Trusty, at Malvern. Sir Barry Jackson has withdrawn after nine honourable campaigns, the control and finance of which must have been enough for any man. Now Mr. Roy Limbert with Sir Cedric Hardwicke, who is pinned to Broadway (New York, not Cotswold) by success, have resolved to carry on and they have justly dedicated their efforts to the secular saint of the spa, St. Bernard, who has so long been the mascot and magnet and scribe-in-chief of the Festival. The programme this year is more of the theatre—it includes new plays by Shaw, Priestley, Bridie, Munro, and Dunsany, and also Miss Bergner in *St. Joan*—and less of the academy.

Those who must absorb culture with their cake at four-thirty have their tea-time talks as usual; moreover, the Gas-and-Leading-Light services are as lavishly laid on as of old. The morning lectures have been continued. There is, perhaps, less atmosphere of the dais and the water-bottle: rather more of gossip and of beer. But still earnest maidenhood is to be seen scurrying with note-books. There are still the nods and becks and wreathèd smiles of "Eng. Lit." Professors being coy and affable with bright young actresses over the noon-day coffee-cups. Altogether one feels the true Malvernian pressure of cerebration. For those who like Dramatic Festivals and hate the drama (possibly a larger number than would care to admit the fact) there are the usual relaxations of pub-crawling, beacon-climbing, swimming, golf, and theatrical tittle-tattling. There is also a Pageant of British Films, which started off with the Palladium Crazy Gang in *O.K. for Sound*. Nobody can say that Malvern fails to try.

G. B. S. himself was an absentee at the start. He ought to be here, where his votive mulberry-tree grows apace in the public gardens, and his frosty pow has for years been the target of snap-shotters and autograph-hunters. Still one can imagine that he now finds it tiring. (So also do some far younger.) He sent his greetings in the form of a new piece called *Geneva* and he generously showed no desire to cut those greetings short. The last act (of three) played for an hour and a half and the audience emerged, faint and perspiring, after nearly four hours of exposure to Shavian dialectic, tempered, as is the rule, by mild buffoonery. The Festival opened in ferocious heat with a scamper through a thunderstorm to the first night. The Malvern Theatre, whatever cultural distinctions it may have gathered during the last Jacksonian decade, will never be famous for its ventilation system. Listening to *Geneva* was sticky work. There were certainly times when I thought longingly of the wind and even the rain on the heath and of the Palladium Crazy Gang, who were flickering on the screen next door.

Mr. Shaw's *Geneva* offered a Crazy Gang of its own kind. First let us be grateful that the Censorship has slackened its old discipline in regard to living figures and personalities. There was a time when Mr. Shaw could not even mention General Mitchener. Now he can introduce us to Bombardone, Battler, and Flanco de Fortinbras. The first, for whom Mr. Cecil Trouncer has the right name, the right brow, the right jawbone, and the right vocal thunder is arrayed like Nero, the second arrives armoured in Wagnerian hardware, and the third is permitted to be a modern officer. British diplomacy (muddling through with a monocle) is suitably expounded by Mr. Ernest Thesiger. The Dictators come to the Hague where they have been put on trial for slight cases of murder and so on by the energetic secretary of the League of

Nations office of the International Institute for Intellectual Co-operation.

The first two acts are comparatively brief. They are dominated by one of Mr. Shaw's Young Ladies, the secretary of the office, a pert little Cockney whose jingoism might have been topical in 1900 but is now something of a social curio. Then Eileen Beldon, without whom no Shaw-and-Malvern Festival could hope to be festive, plays the part with great spirit and technical adroitness. This young person sets The Hague trials in motion and up to judgment obediently troop, for no discoverable reason, the Crazy Gang. Of course there is no trial, despite the presence of a righteous judge (Mr. Donald Wolfit) and no sentence. There is just an endless flow of political back-chat. Bombardone is Mr. Shaw's pet and gets all the good lines, scoring off his successor and mimic Battler with ease and gusto. It is typical of Mr. Shaw's politics that democracy is represented by a red-tied phrase-monger who might still be discovered somewhere at the far end of Trade Unionism but bears no relation to a Labour Cabinet. Democracy is something of a devil to Mr. Shaw who remains impenitently disinclined to give the devil a quarter of his due.

Geneva has nothing to do with the art of the theatre. It is the usual loquacious charade which Mr. Shaw has latterly been turning out. Mr. Ayliff's name was there as producer. But production there was not. Perhaps there could be none. The players, some of whom were miscast or unskilful, sat about and waited for their lines. One player sat nearly all the time straight between Battler and the section of the audience where I was sitting. Mr. Norman Woolland's performance as Battler was " O.K. for Sound," but, being thus masked, was mainly invisible to me. Mr. Shaw's Dictators pulverised the poor Democrat and peppered each other. The Judge smiled sagaciously and occasionally put in a good word for Law and Order. It was decided that Man has failed badly as a Political Animal. Need we go so far to learn so little, as Sam Weller's charity boy said when they put him through the alphabet? On the other hand there was one Note of Hope. The judge pointed out that the Dictators, while under no compulsion to attend his court of world-conscience, did come. The idea, I suppose, is that nobody is quite so imperious and self-dependent as he wishes to seem. Even Dictators have not wholly crushed the dictates of the heart or their regard for public opinion. They have sometimes their doubts and self-questionings. It would be nice to think so.

IVOR BROWN

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Silent Woman," at the Playhouse, Oxford

Dryden found in this comedy " the pattern of a perfect play." " The Intrigue of it," he continued, " is the greatest and noblest of any pure unmix'd Comedy in any language." But *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* are much more delightful to a modern audience. The plot of *The Silent Woman* is brilliant, but the *dénouement* can hardly now come as a surprise even to the unlettered, unless the female parts, as well as Epicoene, are played by boys. More serious, we prize Ben Jonson for his language rather than for his observation of the unities, and in the prose of *The Silent Woman* we do not find the Renaissance sumptuousness that we feast upon in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. Finally, the comedy is too brutal. Morose is a wonderful study of a neurotic who cannot endure noise and disorder—a twentieth century man, as it were, marooned in a more thick-skinned age. His over-sensitive nerves excite our sympathy rather than our ridicule; and the horse-play at the expense of Daw and La-Foole is also too coarse for our degenerate age, in which physical cowardice seems more pitiable than despicable. The beating and kicking reflect too faithfully the nastier traditions of our prep. schools. But not only are we too nice to enjoy fully this play, we are also too ignorant: the Latin with which it is larded is lost on most of the spectators. And yet the play remains a superb comedy, which we are very grateful to see performed. It would be agreeable to congratulate the organisers of " Oxford Summer Diversions " as heartily upon their achievements as upon their intentions. But most of the acting was below the standard that we have come to expect from amateurs in University cities. Morose and Sir Dauphine were good, Truewit spoke clearly, and Epicoene was admirably feminine, but other members of the cast were too frequently incomprehensible. The great merit of performances given for instance by the Marlowe Society at Cambridge is that the producer thoroughly understands the play and induces his actors to speak clearly and intelligently. In this Oxford performance articulateness was continually being sacrificed to boisterousness. If the revival of old plays at Oxford is to be an enjoyable annual event, it is essential that the actors should be instructed in the art of making their lines intelligible.

"Kidnapped," at the Gaumont
"Shopworn Angel," lately at the Empire

The film of *Kidnapped* deals faithfully enough (allowing for inevitable compression) with Stevenson's story, and the acting is adequate, and in the case of Freddie Bartholomew, rather more than adequate. Why, then, all those yawns and unsympathetic comments? Is it simply that the story itself is no longer interesting enough to stand on its own merits? A modern public prefers adventures more complicated, villains more various, motives less transparent. This applies to films and books alike. The conversations in *Kidnapped* are not much fun if you are accustomed to the sprightlier exchanges of *A Slight Case of Murder*. The unfolding of the plot can only bore those who are accustomed to thread the dark labyrinths with Agatha and Dorothy. The characters are so many types—brave, loyal schoolboy, daring rebel, resourceful heroine, good old Duke. There remains the atmosphere of eighteenth-century Scotland, and this the film makes a brave effort to recapture. The Castle of Balfour is a fine romantic creation, with a terrifying, bat-infested staircase; and Edinburgh is pretty, rather too pretty. Romantic shadows abound; and at first it is rather a relief to be spared the usual hard, efficient Hollywood lighting. But soon the persistent sepia becomes a bore, and Olde Scottelande seems to be covered from east to west in a brown gravy-like fog. *Kidnapped* can be recommended only to those who enjoy undiluted derring-do.

The Shopworn Angel, on the other hand, is gripping until the story is allowed to get out of hand. The idea is simple. A naive and lovable Texas cowboy (James Stewart) joins up in 1917, and on his way through New York encounters a selfish, discontented actress (Margaret Sullavan). He pretends to his friends that he knows her, and to save his face she plays up. The influence of his goodness and devotion so touches her that she recovers her delight in simple pleasures and, instead of bickering with her lover, proposes to settle down and marry him. But by this time the boy is head over ears in love, and his detachment has to sail the next day for France. So far so good. The acting of Margaret Sullavan and of James Stewart is extremely sensitive, and the scenes in which their different conceptions of the world clash are amusing and at times moving. But someone or other at Hollywood (surely not the author) has resolved the situation so fantastically that the players themselves can hardly pretend to believe in their behaviour. In order to protect his illusions and give him an ideal to sustain him through the war, the actress marries the cowboy an hour before he sails. He spends the entire war (it seems) writing letters to her, and is fortunately killed before the Armistice. Fortunately, because she had never loved him, and what was going to happen if he had come back safe and sound, one cannot imagine. In spite of its absurd conclusion, the film is worth seeing.

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, August 6th—
    Promenade Concert Season opens, Queen's Hall, 8. Till October 1st.
    Abbey Theatre Festival, Dublin.
SUNDAY, August 7th—
    Second Week of Fabian Summer School, Dartington Hall, near Totnes, Devon.
TUESDAY, August 9th—
    " As You Like It," Open Air Theatre.
WEDNESDAY, August 10th—
    " Give Me Yesterday," Comedy.
THURSDAY, August 11th—
    " The Last Train South," St. Martin's.
TUESDAY, August 16th—
    Peace Academy Summer School, Chateau du Montcel, Jouy-en-Josas (S. et O.). Till August 29th. Particulars from 72 Abbey Road, N.W.8.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

READABILITY is a word which may rank high or low in a critic's vocabulary. We have met it so often in advertisements —" Readable, says the *Orkney Times* "—that to the fastidious it has come almost to stand for its opposite : the worst one can say of an author, except that he is unreadable. Like all critical terms it has suffered by being too intimately linked with the likes and dislikes of critics. What I enjoy reading Mr. Agate probably loathes ; his " readable " would be a ticket of a rather different colour from mine. And yet, outside individual preference, there is obviously a quality in writing for which we should reserve the word " readability." Some bad writers possess it ; not all good writers do ; Kafka, for example, and Proust are " unreadables " in the first rank. They fascinate, but they tire. They find converts, whereas the frictionless art of a Byron or a Maupassant attracts thousands whose sensibility must be aroused easily if at all. Proust appeals to a particular kind of reader, Byron to the habit of reading. I do not think the gain is all on one side or the other. But easy access and easy going—which the literary tend to despise in a writer unless he is obviously great—become a positive quality when allied to other gifts. How positive the readability of Mr. Wells ! His early scientific romances, *The Invisible Man, The War of the Worlds*, which I happened to pick up again lately, go with a bang. Is *The Invisible Man* better literature than, say, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* ? Perhaps not, though as long as it remains the more readable I shall prefer it. What popular author writes as well to-day ? In England, no one, not even Mr. Wells. In France, there is always the admirable M. Simenon, master of the *roman policier*, who now produces novels of astonishing quality at the rate of one a month. " Avez-vous lu le Simenon de Juillet 1938 ? " asks the wrapper boldly, and it takes our breath away. Such prodigies, we thought, had ceased to exist. As a writing machine he makes even Edgar Wallace look silly ; and Wallace produced only one piece of work comparable in quality with Simenon's—his play *On the Spot*. Imagine an *On the Spot* coming out half a dozen times a year and you will understand the peculiar position occupied by Simenon among living French writers.

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The *roman policier* has always seemed to me to possess immense literary advantages over its English equivalent, the detective story. The differences between the two forms are plain enough in their originators—Poe and Dostoievsky. No detective story can afford to be longer than *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* without anticlimax, detection being in itself of very minor interest, whereas the psychology of crime can hold us through novels twice as long as *Crime and Punishment* and *Les Misérables*. The emphasis of the detective story is misplaced. What, as a matter of fact, are the naturally dramatic moments of a crime ? I should say the events leading up to it, the crime itself, and the subsequent behaviour of the criminal. These are incidental to the detective-novelist who subordinates everything to the behaviour of the police or of a fairy-prince investigator. We are allowed to see everything that goes on in the mind of a detective while the murderer is so unlike a murderer that we do not even suspect him till p. 300 ! No wonder Miss Dorothy Sayers has failed to square detective fiction with serious novel-writing. In Simenon, on the other hand, though he may sometimes withhold a fact about his characters to increase tension, we are given a series of admirably realistic studies of petty criminals and their surroundings. The theme is not necessarily murder ; it may be robbery, suicide, an anarchist plot, an elopement, a disputed will. Whatever the cause, an atmosphere is created, that atmosphere of dread and expectancy by which one learns to recognise a Simenon story, when every detail shows pin-sharp like leaves before a storm. " Something is going to happen "—we are made to feel that in the first few pages, and the victim or the criminal hurries here and there as calamity approaches. One of his earliest and best books, *Le Locataire*, describes a man wanted by the police for murder who hides in a suburban boarding-house ; he has a sumptuous coat, a ring or two, and manners which impress the other lodgers, but they notice that he never goes out except at night. It is the sort of situation in which Simenon delights ; the rigid lives and little habits of all the people in the house are set before us cruelly and delightfully. This old lady who nods over her coffee secretly tipples, this middle-aged man with the timid eyes and frightening moustache has his weekly evening as a champion bowls-player, this young girl without a lover smokes for effect. Their interest is focused on the important new lodger. Gradually they piece together his crime, and though no word on the subject ever passes between them and him, they show their sympathy by little attentions. It is he who is treated to a glass of *fine*, who gets the breast of poultry and the seat by the fire. And he settles down to this comfort, a spider among the flies, sucking the money out of their purses and the secrets out of their lives. How they regret their kindness now that it is too late ! The hunted man has become a tyrant who brings unhappiness to them all, and he would probably go on blackmailing their kindness for years, if it were not that he rashly shows himself in the street and is arrested. It only remains for the boarding-house to settle down as best it can, to a shattered recovery and finally—for they still regret the whiff of flashier living the stranger has brought them—to a sense of loss.

* * *

Le Locataire was the first story by Simenon I read ; after some years I may have mistaken some of the details, but the powerful impression remains. The novel most like it in English is Mr. C. S. Forester's *Payment Deferred*, a good story simply told, but Simenon has a far richer resource of psychology and detail. Perhaps because I read it first I still think it his best book, though there are half a dozen others among those I have read which run it close : *Les Suicidés, M. Gallet Décedé, Les Clients D'Avrénos, L'Assassin, Chemin Sans Issu, Faubourg*. The scene in each of these books is different : Amsterdam, Paris, La Rochelle, Constantinople ; he even visits Africa and South America. In each case the locality and the shifting life of street, café, and apartment are admirably conveyed. I have never yet, I may add, after some experience, come across a bad Simenon. For the English reader who prefers to try him in translation there is only, so far as I can discover, one book of his in English, *The Disintegration of J. P. G.* (Routledge, 7*s.* 6*d.*). It is the story of a schoolmaster in La Rochelle whose rigid family life is suddenly undermined by the appearance in the town of a woman accomplice of earlier days. Eighteen years before he had been convicted of murder and had escaped from the penal settlement in New Guinea. His disintegration and collapse under the strain of the past are described with thrilling precision.

* * *

Nearly all the heroes—or victims—of Simenon's books are " little men "—*bourgeois ratés* I think he somewhere calls them. He sees crime as emotional failure and as a necessity in certain lives, and it is psychological acuteness among other things which raises these tense and squalid tales above mere thrillers. Where did he gain his experience ? One of the novels set in the form of autobiography, *Les Trois Crimes de Mes Amis*, describes a childhood in Liège during the war years ; its picture of dark streets, drunkenness, starvation, precocious sex and the league of youthful *âmes damnées* who met every night in a room above a brothel to discuss art and crime is perhaps taken from the author's own memories. One of their company, a poet, hanged himself at the age of seventeen, and two others in later life were convicted of murder; he himself took to writing novels about crime. Though a cruel writer, and in literary approach a realist, he is not perhaps so cold-hearted as he may appear. He has a deep sense of evil, lightly expressed. He is convincing. Above all, he is marvellously readable. G. W. STONIER

ONUS VALLIS VISIONIS

Arthur Rimbaud. By ENID STARKIE. *Faber.* 15s.

This is the most complete and best informed life of Rimbaud that I have read. Miss Starkie has had access to new material and brought a critical sense unhampered by preconceived ideas to the understanding of it. Everyone has "their theory" about Rimbaud. That of Miss Starkie is that Rimbaud was a mystic who for a period really thought that he was God, that he had found the key to existence, had reconciled good and evil, and risen superior to life; this was the period of *Bateau Ivre*, *Les Illuminations*, his friendship with Verlaine, and his missing work, *La Chasse Spirituelle*—but Rimbaud had in imitation of Baudelaire used too many short cuts; and his relations with Verlaine made it hard for him to sustain the illusion. In the "dark night of the soul" which followed, the *Saison en enfer*, he wrestled with doubt about his inspiration, the nature of his influence on Verlaine (Délires I) and of his "alchemy of the word" (Délires II)—unlike other mystics he did not emerge from the "dark night" more conscious of the authenticity of his vision. There was no one to cry "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased"—on the contrary, he was shattered by it, and the victory he thought he had won was only the acceptance of his position in life, his return to reality "Esclaves, ne maudissons pas la vie"—a victory which was impoverishing and worthless to the victor. From that moment his life, in so far as it was possible, became based on conventional values, or his conception of them. He became an adventurer determined to make money, kind to his subordinates, quarrelsome with his superiors, anxious for news of home, ambitious to save money, return to France, marry and settle down—and his life was a double tragedy—because he failed as completely in his material struggle as in his spiritual one. The long agony of his last illness, when he tried in vain to return to Abyssinia after the amputation of his poisoned leg, seems to parallel the anguish of the *Saison en Enfer* when he tried to return to childhood purity and adolescent omnipotence despite the prick of common sense. Miss Starkie does good service in discrediting the accepted idea, that Rimbaud, after Verlaine stabbed him and went to prison, wrote the *Saison en Enfer* as his farewell to literature and rushed off to Abyssinia to make money, never putting pen to paper again and hating all his old associates. What is the truth? Rimbaud took great pains over the *Saison en Enfer*, it is the only considerable work of his that he saw through the press and carefully revised. He sent copies away and regarded it as the beginning of his literary career, not the end of it.

> There is no evidence that Rimbaud intended to say a final and definitive farewell to art; it was only to be a farewell to frenzied inspiration, to the *Théorie du voyant*, to *L'Alchimie du Verbe*. "Cela s'est passé," he said at the end of *L'Alchimie du Verbe*, referring to his previous attitude to art. "Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté." Delahaye tells us that Rimbaud had spoken to him during the winter of 1872–3 of the new prose poems he was going to compose, not the short prose poems of the previous year, but poems on a grandiose scale, something more vivid than Michelet. The general title was to be *l'Histoire Magnifique*, and it was to open with scenes called *Photographies des Temps Passées.*

It is clear from this (*Photographies* is the operative word) that Rimbaud was moving towards a less personal form, a literary realism. Disappointment at the reception of *Une Saison en Enfer* might have made it harder for him to go on, but the life he led during the next six years must have. For it was six years before he abandoned Europe, six years in which he lost his looks, began to grow grey at twenty-five, in which he lived in London with Germain Nouveau, threatened Verlaine, became interpreter to a circus, and year after year set out for the East, only to be repatriated by a French consul, back to Charleville. "Verses of his?" wrote Delahaye to Verlaine in 1875. "His inspiration has long run dry." The Rimbaud of these six years is still the Rimbaud of before, the boy genius, the "époux infernal," but abandoned by the Muses, with only his faults remaining; the Rimbaud of Harar, proud of his business reputation, his word, his efficiency, his industry and parsimony is no longer the husk of inspiration, but the new kernel of reality. Miss Starkie goes very fully into Rimbaud's Abyssinian life and shows how, in the rude society of Harar, Rimbaud was still famous for his wit, his erudition and his anecdotes—the intellect which made him the prize pupil of Charleville continued to mature, as his handwriting showed, independently of the vicissitudes of genius. If his leg had not been poisoned, he might easily have become an important figure, a wielder of French influence in the complicated struggle for Abyssinia, a great administrator. The letter from Ras Makonnen to Rimbaud's sister on his death shows his hold on one Abyssinian. Miss Starkie has chapters on Baudelaire's influence on Rimbaud, on Rimbaud "le voyant" and Rimbaud "le voyou," on the Cabbala, and the mysticism of Ballanches, and on the curious moving poem, *Le Coeur Supplicié*, which she claims is the result of an unfortunate experience in the barracks of the National Guard which was to colour his whole life. Its symbolism substantiates this. There are some interesting illustrations, a photograph of the young Rimbaud which one can compare with Fantin Latour's delicious *Coin de Table*—the Rimbaud in the painting looks like a pensive Botticelli angel beside Verlaine's correct, weak, ninety-ish schoolmaster figure: the Rimbaud in the photograph is a spiritual Dillinger. There is a full bibliography. The faults of the book, besides a misquoting of the title of Waugh's *Remote People* and *le* for *la* on page 182, are iteration, amplification and digression—a lack of distinction in the writing and a somewhat harsh summing-up. At the age when English writers are still qualifying for the school magazine, Rimbaud had created at least six works of absolute genius and raised problems which critics of all nations are still trying to answer. Miss Starkie has most intelligently stated them.

But everyone, as I said, has their theory about Rimbaud; I continue with some reflections after reading Miss Starkie, and re-reading him.

The three "writers" of the nineteenth century, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud, are all French. Beside them, as beside Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Chehov, English authors—Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, Dickens—appear amateurs, incomplete and immature talents hamstrung by respectability. Keats, Shelley, Byron were the last European geniuses which England produced. They represent the romantic heyday. English literature of the nineteenth century could not improve on them, any more than could Musset or Hugo. They were to dominate our poetry. English writers were not prepared to sacrifice their lives to the dictates of their artistic conscience, to be celibate like Flaubert, or debauched like Baudelaire and Rimbaud: they would not stand up to the matador. They represented romanticism in decay, shielded from its logical consequences by good mixing, anglican ethics, Victorianism. Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Flaubert are important because they made a synthesis out of romanticism and realism. Thus a hundred years after Keats we have Rupert Brooke, who is still blending a washy Keatsian romanticism with a dash of Byron. English poetry in the nineteenth century did not, except for Hopkins, in any way *progress*—but in French poetry Baudelaire had carried the romantic movement a step beyond Hugo and Lamartine, and Rimbaud taken it a step beyond Baudelaire.

Romantic poetry is the poetry of the Fall, poetry in which childhood represents a state of grace, a period of innocence and the apprehension of beauty, and maturity a period of disillusion, when the sense of guilt, the knowledge of good and evil, of the conflict between soul and body, poisons all. Romanticism is the logical aesthetic consequence of Platonism and Christianity, and Romantics who accept the Fall but reject Redemption take refuge in Satanism, as their defeatist cult. Baudelaire tried "les paradis artificiels," Rimbaud saw that it was necessary to get outside Christianity altogether, and introduced the cult of the negro, who was untarnished by the sense of sin; his original title for *Une Saison en Enfer* was *Livre Païen ou Livre Nègre*. And he put the blame for his romanticism on his forbears, the servile Gauls, easy prey of the Church, and on "cette sale éducation de mon enfance." He saw the nature of the problem. Romanticism is a state of mind which has been suggested to humanity by Christian morality and which is tragic when not supported by Christian belief, for it is the idea of Eden and the Fall, without Paradise to round it off. It is aesthetic Calvinism. Why go through life looking always back to childhood, why tolerate a philosophy which envisages life as a paradise before puberty, a series of ecstatic moments in early youth, and a disastrous anticlimax, a gradation of decay after the age of twenty-six? Why carry a burden of guilt for sins never committed, why split oneself up into two people, an angel and a baboon? Who cares about the childhood of Voltaire? Of Horace, Lenin, Newton, or Julius Caesar? Why reject maturity, and be afraid to grow up? The English pre-romantics, Vaughan, Traherne, Jeremy Taylor, balanced their love of childhood by their hope of heaven. To accept the Fall and reject Redemption is to be a scapegoat of Christianity, victim of a confidence trick. Aware of this, and of the need for a religion, Rimbaud had staked everything on his personal vision, and worn himself out in the process. Had he had any money at all, that is to say, fewer hardships and privations, and the leisure to gain disciples without the necessity of admitting defeat by returning home—home where his failure to rise above his surroundings was always rubbed in—he might have lasted longer, and have made contributions to realistic literature as valuable as *Les Illuminations* have been to romantic. One cause of Rimbaud's silence was that he was too poor to write, for the poverty that is tolerable to a boy becomes reproachful to a young man.

Technically, the English writer who most resembles Rimbaud is Blake. How curious the parallel between Rimbaud's poetry and *The Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, between some of his prose and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, between Swedenborg and the Cabbala, and their attitudes to Christianity. Even their beginnings are alike, one starting at the age of fifteen with:

> How sweet I roamed from field to field
> And tasted all the summer's pride.

the other with

> Par les soirs bleus d'été j'irai dans les sentiers
> Picoté par les blés, fouler l'herbe menue.

Another cause contributing to Rimbaud's rejection of his art which could be gone into more deeply is his use of drugs. We know he and Verlaine experimented with drugs, but how much, and when? Did he use opium as well as hashish? Has some competent opium-poet, like Cocteau, ever gone over Rimbaud's work, noticing what images and what poems suggest the influence of the drug to him? I have heard that opium smokers develop an exquisite lyrical sense, that they are capable of writing short lyrics of great beauty, but of no sustained effort—opium-smoking painters for instance, tend to produce fashion-drawings. Cannot one detect three kinds of effect in the later work—the hit—when the drug has liberated some subconscious memory of childhood, the artificial paradise held the key to the "vert paradis"; the miss, when the drug sets up images which are as communication meaningless, like jokes in dreams; and thirdly, the conscious effort, written without external stimulus, the descriptive prose poem, in which one is more conscious of talent than of magic? Examples:

(1) Hit. Une matinée couverte en juillet. Un goût de cendres vole dans l'air;—une odeur de bois suant dans l'âtre,—les fleurs rouies—le saccage des promenades—la bruine des canaux par les champs.

(2) Hit. The whole of *Enfance*—which seems, especially, sections 2, 3, 4, to be influenced by opium or hashish. "O les calvaires et les moulins du désert, les îles et les meules!" "Ilya enfin, quand l'on a faim et soif, quelqu'un qui vous chasse." "Des fleurs magiques bourdonnaient," etc.

(3) Miss. All such poems as *Nocturne Vulgaire* with its clinical comment, "Un vert et un bleu très foncés envahissent l'image"—or such impressions as "Oh—le pavillon en viande sanglante sur la soie des mers et des fleurs arctiques; (elles n'existent pas)—"

(4) Straight. The longer prose poems, *Villes*, *Conte*, etc., which seem written in a different language.

If the *Illuminations* were written under the influence of drugs then *Une Saison en Enfer* might be written during a disintoxication, for Rimbaud could hardly obtain such things at Charleville. The depression of the cure would then be an ingredient in his despair, and disgust at the clumsy and fallible stimulant contribute to his disgust with the art produced by it.

Verlaine and Rimbaud, the caterpillar and the ichneumon—Verlaine's face: authority waiting to be depraved, "que de larmes! et que de larmes encore plus tard, j'espère!", Rimbaud's the destroying angel. There is an element of masochism in cultured liberal society—from time to time it generates such high-powered scavengers, and when they have done their work, eaten out the decaying tissue, it turns on them.

Rimbaud's influence. Alas, it has been tardy and misdirected. If only the *jeune ménage* of Howland Street had been presented with letters of introduction in the early seventies, to young Mr. Gosse, or Pater of Queen's, how much ink and paper would have been saved. There might have been no Georgian poetry!

For the lesson to be learnt from Rimbaud is that, after him, romanticism can go no farther, a reaction is necessary, inevitable. Rimbaud knew this himself, hence his plan for the *Photographies*. Those who have been influenced by him, being romantics, have refused to see it, and used him to sanction their short-cuts and excesses. They accept the lovely ejaculations and apostrophes of *Les Illuminations* and ignore the concentrated realism of *Une Saison en Enfer*, like guests who look away when the bill arrives. Thus the conception of the poet as the seer opens the field to the charlatan. Surrealist poetry ignores the conclusions Rimbaud himself drew from this theory and in consequence has not produced anything to equal him. However much Rimbaud raided the subconscious and the world of dreams it must be remembered that he was a first-rate intellect and a ruthlessly conscious artist, his alchemy of the word was paid for in a gruelling apprenticeship, and even he took short cuts which he afterwards repudiated. Those whom he has influenced, with hardly an exception, have only ended where he began, instead of beginning where he left off. Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud, were romantic writers who were intelligent enough to purge their medium. Though occupied with problems of guilt and sin they eliminated romantic traces from their technique, they permitted no luxuriance, vagueness, inflation, or verbosity, their sentiment was never false. To jot down nostalgic dreams, to flaunt a private damnation, a delphic obscurity will not make a Rimbaud any more than an arrangement of dots will produce a Seurat. What must remain supreme in Rimbaud is the fusion of romantic imagination, militant thought and verbal mastery into, in his best passages, a precision of inspiration.

> C'est le repos éclairé, ni fièvre, ni langueur, sur le lit ou sur le pré.
> C'est l'ami ni ardent ni faible. L'ami.
> C'est l'aimée ni tourmentante ni tourmentée. L'aimée.
> L'air et le monde point cherchés. La vie.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

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SOME AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Patches of Sunlight. By LORD DUNSANY. *Heinemann.* 15s.

The Way to the Present. By JOHN VAN DRUTEN. *Michael Joseph.* 10s. 6d.

The Testament of Caliban. By DAVID EDSTROM. *Robert Hale.* 12s. 6d.

Only an uncommonly dull man can write an autobiography with no interest at all, and not even the last of these three, which are listed in order of interest, can quite qualify. For Mr. Edstrom, who is advertised as "The World-famous Sculptor," has failed to murder all his doings with vanity. He is not a fascinating, lonely egotist like Haydon, but a go-getter who depends largely on testimonials. His life begins: "I burst, in angry protest, from the warm seclusion of my mother's womb." But not even this style spoils some good facts about the Swedish community in American towns, habits and superstitions in the north of Sweden, stoking in stores and ships, pig-slaughtering, and the wrong way to be rude to women. Women have given Mr. Edstrom a lot of trouble. "One of the great problems of American civilisation," he says, "is crime. The cause is the emancipation of woman and through that the teaching of boys by women teachers."

From a boy Mr. Edstrom determined to be an artist at any cost. Lord Dunsany, whose only real profession has been the Army, says: "It is by wandering ways that I came to be a writer at all." Yet he believes that any interest in the story of his life can only come from his writing. On the whole that is truer of his writing in this book itself than of what he says in it about his others; for much of the description and narrative is beautifully done, and some very good stories are told well. A great part of his effectiveness is in the quality of his understatement, which is quite free of slyness and avuncular fun.

The best example is not in his own mouth. He was shot in the nose in the Easter Rebellion in Dublin; the man who made him prisoner apologised and took him to hospital, where

> . . . . the bullets were streaming past the windows all day, till the window-sills were shiny with bits of nickel. . . . I was getting weary of these bullets one morning and Sister Basil saw my weariness, for she looked out of the window where they were cracking by, and said of them: "The nasty little things."

The Irish are good at this kind of thing, which is often a product of ambitious self-confidence. Lord Dunsany is too sensible to cherish an ambition to live in a world of the imagination, but he is self-confident about the processes of his imagination and its products. With them behind him he systematically minimises his doings in the present world: when he has to search for a lost man in an African jungle it is "curious"; it was a "bright night" when the munitions factory in Londonderry was on fire; the amenities of his life—staggering, of course, to workers—are slightly written down. They provide the transitions in the story ("From Scotland we returned to Rood Ashton, from the pursuit of stags to the pursuit of votes") and the padding.

I smiled only once where I think I was not meant to: "And then my wife got a cough brought on by motor drives to and from meetings in autumn nights and we went to Egypt to cure it."

In his early thoughts about his writing he gave little importance to observation and fact, though it is plain from this book that he observed very closely even as a child: and later on he came to see that the matter of his stories had often unexpected origins in something he had read or seen. At intervals in the book there are amateur approximations to a *Road to Xanadu* method, and for one reason or another Coleridge kept coming into my mind as I read it. He would have called Lord Dunsany a writer of Fancy and not of Imagination—Fancy which is "a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space." Lord Dunsany sometimes strains to underestimate the part played by will and choice in the making of his stories; but their importance appears whenever he talks about words and the sound of them. It seems as if the starting-point of some work has been almost only verbal, a phrase or a fine-sounding name which brought along a plot by association: and sometimes plain observation is mixed with inappropriate stuff from literary sources. Take this sentence:

> We turned that corner where de Lesseps stands, with one bronze hand held out to the eastern gate of the world; and the corrupt city of Port Said drops astern, a cluster of white domes in the evening, the sort of thing an angel might dream on waking; just leaving it behind him, you know, as we were.

and compare it with one of Mr. Forster's:

> Salute to the Orient! Given at Port Said presumably, where the statue of M. de Lesseps points to the Suez Canal with one hand and waves in the other a heavy bunch of large stone sausages. "Me voici!" he gesticulates, adding "Le voilà" as an afterthought.

The Forster vraisemblance is all fake: the statue is metal, the thing in its left hand does not look like sausages; but the whole effect is more convincing than Dunsany's accuracy diluted with an angel's dream. Perhaps this has something to do with Fancy and Imagination.

Mr. van Druten also is out to tell the story of how he came to be a writer; he gives no hints of mysteries in the job; he is neither over-assertive nor over-diffident about it. His book is a straight and competent account of his life up to the point when he sailed for America after the first production of *Young Woodley* there. Friends sent telegrams to his ship saying: "Don't get spoiled." It seems that he hasn't; and this alone should ensure some popular success for his book. The description of his Anglo-Dutch home in North London and his schooling at U.C.S. Hampstead cover *Sinister Street* country without the background of roses and philosophy; and the family's muddled vagrant life during the war, complicated by Belgian relations, gives him a chance to get across the anxious tedium of non-combatants rich enough not to be pinched. His manhood began in a lawyer's office, and he has sensible things to say about articled clerks. He reached writerhood via a lectureship in Law at Aberystwyth: the vulgarity and pettiness of a provincial college are not overstressed, and the atmosphere of defeatism that he suggests among the staff is horribly true. There is nothing funny or brilliant or vulgar in the book. HUMPHRY HOUSE

EARLY BRITISH ECONOMICS

Early British Economics from XIV Century to the Middle of the XVIII Century. By M. BEER. *Allen and Unwin.* 7s. 6d.

All who are interested in the mercantilist age will be grateful to Mr. Beer for this bold and stimulating survey, which sets the whole development of British economic thought from the schoolmen of the thirteenth century to Adam Smith in perspective as an integral part of the history of the rise of the merchant class to power. The fundamental premises of mercantilism, namely, that money or treasure constitute wealth and that foreign trade is the only means of bringing money or treasure into the realm remained undisturbed until nearly the end of the seventeenth century, a fact that is not difficult to understand in the light of England's continuing need for a supply of the precious metals. What is more difficult to grasp is the exact nature of the changes in thought that during the seventeenth century led to changes in the policies which were adopted for ensuring that supply. It is Mr. Beer's thesis, sustained with an admirable clarity, that the problem must be analysed in the light of the interests and the underlying ethical attitudes involved. In these respects the period of bullionist legislation stands in sharp contrast to the age of balance of trade policies. In the first it was the interests of the personal monarchy that prevailed. Edward I in his desperate need for money encouraged the alien merchants who were promoting foreign trade, and his policy survived until it was finally overthrown by the efforts of the native merchant class. Inspired by medieval universalism, it was a non-nationalist policy; the author suggests that it was the native merchants, in combating it, who "created the English national idea, English patriotism."

In combating medieval and Tudor policy it was necessary also for the merchants to induce an abrupt transition in ethical ideas. Formerly the guiding principle in economic affairs had been that of commutative justice: there must be equality of exchanges. As regards individual conduct, this gave rise to the Usury Laws; as regards the realm as a whole it gave rise to the Sumptuary Laws and the Statutes of Employment, designed to ensure that imports should exactly equal exports, the former by discouraging excessive consumption of foreign luxuries and the latter by compelling alien importers to lay out the proceeds of their sales in the purchase of English goods for export. Thus, it was felt, there was equality in exchange. The economic troubles of the sixteenth century finally swept these ideals away. Although the circle of conservative nobles and officials about the first two Stuarts still clung to them, their ideas were completely out of harmony with those of the merchants. These were now basing a theory of foreign trade policy upon the principle that it was best to sell more than one bought in order to enrich the realm, at the expense of the foreigner as they conceived, by ensuring that gold and silver would have to be brought into the country. The victory of this type of thinking can be traced throughout the work of the chief economic writers of the seventeenth century.

The significance of this reversal of ethical attitudes is further illustrated by its repercussions upon political thought and also upon social relations. The new theory of the balance of trade, profit at the expense of your neighbours, was enunciated in tune with the new theory of the balance of power: the one is the exact counterpart of the other. Francis Bacon, who held to both, appears in this regard as more than ever the representative man of the age in which England broke with medieval ideals. In social relations the harshness of the mercantilist writers towards the working classes, after they had assisted in winning the victory of the Civil War, is painfully evident.

Much must necessarily be omitted or curtailed in endeavouring to cover so vast a field in so small a volume. For example, the development of theories of value cannot be fully treated throughout the period. Yet here, as also in other directions, the author has been generous with helpful suggestions. One is guarded from misunderstanding of Locke by the view that in extolling labour he was thinking primarily of the labour of merchants. And in the closing Retrospect a number of suggestions are offered as to the explanation of the confusions in Aristotle's theory of value and as to his influence upon British economic thought.

VOLUNTARY MATERNITY

Conscript Parenthood? The Problem of Secret Abortion. By Alice Jenkins. *George Standing.* 2s.

In this small book, Mrs. Jenkins has effectively brought together a large number of the facts, historic and present-day, illustrative of the practice of abortion and of the attitude towards that operation shown at different periods by ecclesiastics, doctors, and the general public. Her aim being a propagandist one, she scarcely does justice to the realities of the objections raised by the less prejudiced opponents of the wholesale legalisation of abortion. Nor does she give much consideration to social and economic reforms that would, at any rate, reduce the need for, and the demand for, this relatively serious operation. To these preventive measures, however, Dr. Joan Malleson refers in the Foreword which she contributes to the book. "The proper deterrents to abortion," Dr. Malleson writes, "are better social conditions, more easily available contraceptive knowledge, and better education regarding the dangers of abortion. These measures are slowly coming, and they will eventually help to lessen it. But in the meantime, and perhaps always, there remains the spectre of the 'desperate woman.'"

Every year, it is estimated that something between 90,000 and 100,000 women in this country are "criminally aborted"; and it would be interesting and valuable to know the causes and the psychological motives that lead these women to take so serious a step; for it is a serious step, whatever may be our views as to its moral and hygienic legitimacy. In the course of a recent investigation into 1,000 cases of abortion, it was found that approximately one-third of the "patients" were already mothers of six or more children. Such women obviously present one problem. Fear of social ostracism constitutes the motive of another large number; whilst, among the well-to-do, the desire to end a pregnancy is due to reluctance to tolerate interference with accustomed social habits and social comforts. Clearly, these two groups—and there are many others—being very differently motivated, present very different problems from those presented by the mothers of six.

Mrs. Jenkins thinks that "much trouble and repeated abortions could be obviated by the voluntary sterilisation of the mother who has given birth to as many children as she feels herself able to cope with." One may or may not agree with this opinion; but she is certainly misinformed when she adds that "medical help can be obtained when demanded, as there is *no law against sterilisation in this country*." (The italics are the author's.) Mrs. Jenkins is a little too ready to brush aside facts that seem unhelpful to her case, as thus: "In Russia, when abortion was legal on wide grounds, the maternal death rate and morbidity was said to be negligible, although this statement has now been contradicted."

In spite of these qualifications, *Conscript Parenthood?* is compact with interesting and relevant information. The subject of abortion is at the moment what the newspapers call topical, and many of us are strongly of opinion that the existing law needs modifying. The nature of the modifications is a matter for discussion.

Harry Roberts

THE PERFECT SIMONITE

Sir John Simon. A Biography by Bechhofer Roberts. *Robert Hale.* 12s. 6d.

Even Sir John Simon's most contemptuous critics (and they are not few) would have to admit that he looks very well on paper. Although a great part of this book, written in an easy style and without fulsomeness, is rightly taken up with Simon's cases, its real purpose is political—to estimate the career of one "standing to-day on the threshold of Premiership." There have been so many rising hopes of the stern, unbending Asquithians, so many men who would have been Prime Minister but for Mr. Lloyd George and the war: yet Simon would have to take a very prominent place in that company. He was disliked and feared by the Conservatives, and his decision to desert the perfectly safe seat of Walthamstow for the crucial division of North-West Manchester indicates both his prestige and his courage. Mr. Roberts is right to emphasise his political and personal courage during the war. He resigned the Home Secretaryship rather than agree to conscription and went out to serve in France.

His political career since the war has been remarkably interesting, and Mr. Roberts hardly treats it with sufficient insight. It is no doubt true that the bias of individual Liberals since the war in favour of Conservatism or Socialism has been influenced by the nature of the opposition in their constituencies. The formidable opponent in Spen Valley has always been a Socialist, and Simon has consequently been given a natural sympathy with Conservatives. Even so no real Liberal and no impartial historian can ever forgive Simon for his behaviour in 1931. Mr. Roberts does not appear to see the full significance of his offer to the National Government of "unconditional support." The efforts being made by the real Liberals in the Cabinet to delay the election, an election which had no possible constitutional justification except Conservative self-interest, were vitiated from the moment the

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Conservatives knew that there was another band of Liberals ready to offer "unconditional support" in return for a generous distribution of posts and places. It was conduct hardly less disastrous to Liberalism than that of Sir John's old enemy Mr. Lloyd George in 1918. Moreover, Sir John has never lost an opportunity of attacking and ridiculing his old Liberal colleagues. "There is no loss of friends," cried Fox in public debate with Burke when the latter was deserting his party. If in this case there has been no loss of friends it has not been due to Sir John's forbearance but to the fact that he had so few friends to lose.

Again, Mr. Roberts seems quite blind to the danger to Simon's reputation in his alliance with the Conservatives. He has managed to attract as "Simonites" the swashbuckling element in the Liberal Party which was loudest in support of Mr. Lloyd George's radical programme in 1929 and whose rapid change of coat has been both incredible and discreditable. Moreover, Simon, in order to balance the parties, was given an office for which he was totally unsuited—the Foreign Secretaryship—and in spite of everything Mr. Roberts says his bungling in that office has damaged his prospects of the Premiership. It is indeed difficult to recall in history a politician who arouses more general distrust than does Sir John Simon to-day. Memory suggests the name of Lord Shelburne. He was known to his contemporaries as "the Jesuit of Berkeley Square."

Roger Fulford

PERROT

Reporter. From the Writings of Francis Perrot. With an Introduction by James Bone. *Hutchinson.* 10s. 6d.

What Francis Perrot wrote was widely read, and frequently quoted, but he was unknown to the public. His writings were unsigned. Even this book about him does not give his portrait. It was Chesterton who allowed a person in a play to say of a man, "He's worse than a guttersnipe; he's a Fleet St. journalist." But we all recognise a reporter when we see him on the stage; he wears his old hat in the drawing-room and flourishes a note-book. Shaw, Barrie, and Bennett have done their worst with him, and now he is a comic object. Francis Perrot was a reporter —now lost to us, alas!—and this book is of events, scenes, and reflections in the London of George V, from his writings selected by his wife from the files of the *Manchester Guardian*.

As a journalist too old to be curable of that habit of wearing my hat—the same old hat—in drawing-rooms, while wearing out note-books there, of course I knew Perrot. It took the edge off unlucky fate to find that Fleet Street had assigned to him the same event as yourself, and that he would be with you all day. Like the rest of us, he never used a note-book; and spot-lights repelled him. In a drawing-room to which Perrot had been invited by an important person who had managed to overcome the common distaste for publicity—for how important people hate it and artfully get it!—he would have been overlooked. He would not have been in the crush, nor next to the notabilities, nor standing where the cameras could snap him, but near the exit, ready for instant flight; and apparently not sufficiently amused to be taking notes. He would avoid the refreshment tables, and buy a drink for himself, on leaving, at the nearest pub. But next morning his newspaper would have a cheerful piece about the affair which recorded all that really happened, and concluding with a sly phrase from which a reader could infer what was not divulged.

Journalism is the only profession which is judged by its worst practitioners. They are its exemplars. We hear of "scoops," and of the stratagems by which they are obtained; but never of the journalists who could make a stir, but respect bonds and the times and seasons. What is more, if common reporters and sub-editors did not tidy up the public utterances of the great, newspapers would read like the spilled contents of waste-paper baskets. Certainly Perrot's rosy visage, like that of a spectacled and knowledgeable cherub, and his voice, gentle and cheerfully ironic, invited confidence, though a Cabinet Secret would have been as safe with him as with a Downing Street cat. Yet he was purely a reporter. He was a critic of letters (to enliven you on a long railway journey), a poet, and a traveller, but he never wrote a book. All he had he gave, anonymously, to the task of faithfully recording those affairs which, next day, have joined yesterday's seven thousand years. He admitted it, and he enjoyed doing it. An ungrateful public required it, and there it was, to the best of his ability. When he appeared at his club, a group at a table, anxious to hear the latest, would signal to the modest man in the distance that they had a chair for him. "Well," Perrot would say, "I suppose you want to know what the damned fools have been doing to-day."

But in his odd way he loved the fools, though he never pretended to gladness in his suffering. It was characteristic of him that when he went to sea with the Grand Fleet to witness the surrender of the German navy, he recorded the understanding of British seamen when the doleful ships steamed towards their conquerors. Our men were silent and somewhat embarrassed. "It's a fine sight," said a bluejacket, "but I wouldn't be on one of them ships for the world." On any great occasion, he managed to hear a voice which came from the multitude, saying the word which usually does not get into print. Any reporter may hear it, but the hearing which records it is unusual. Perrot was a remarkable summariser, and his look of weariness during an affair was deceptive; when he departed, he knew what it was all about, and in haste towards the hour of going to press he would indite a yarn, unsigned, which gave the gist and spirit of it.

He saw Humorist win the Derby in 1921, and he was the only critic of the race to observe the horse "sweating and trembling, played out with fearful effort, standing there with drooping head, surrounded by a mob of cheering men in silk hats. They patted his shining hide, but he was too far gone to respond." The winner was found dead in his box less than a month afterwards, and Donoghue, his rider, paid in his autobiography a tribute to the unknown reporter who noticed the horse's distress after victory. Perrot's eye saw not only the target, but all the range, and most of the implications. He was at Florence Nightingale's funeral, and so was I. My only recollection of it is that it was a wet day, but in this book I see it all again, and Perrot is right. He recalls Sidney Street, the Proclamation of George V, Old Sadler's Wells, the fire at Madame Tussaud's ("we've saved all the murderers, but their feet are getting wet"), Cowes Week 1910, Southampton after the loss of the *Titanic*, Scapa 1917, and the Burial of the Unknown Warrior.

And read in this collection "The Imprisoned Tree." Hans Andersen himself never wrote anything much more rum than that, yet it is merely a report. As a slant at the corruptive evil of war I know of only one other story to compare with it, Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly," which is a little masterpiece. It makes a reader regret that Perrot was so modest a man. The trouble was, he knew the best so well that he felt disabled, and the suggestion that he should add to the best only made him chuckle. He wrote for the day, because he thought that to be his mark and so was an entirely original man.

H. M. Tomlinson

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Not to be Taken. By Anthony Berkeley. *Hodder and Stoughton.* 7s. 6d.

The Fashion in Shrouds. By Margery Allingham. *Heinemann.* 8s. 6d.

The Theme is Murder. By Gavin Holt. *Gollancz.* 7s. 6d.

Trent Intervenes. By E. C. Bentley. *Nelson.* 7s. 6d.

Short List. By R. Philmore. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Flying Blind. By Alice Campbell. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Fast Company. By Marco Page. *Heinemann.* 7s. 6d.

Figure Away. By Phoebe Atwood Taylor. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Death Walks Softly. By Neal Shepherd. *Constable.* 7s. 6d.

Burial Service. By Paul McGuire. *Heinemann.* 7s. 6d.

Mrs. Warrender's Profession. By G. D. H. and Margaret Cole. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Do Your Own Time. By Don Castle. *Arthur Barker.* 7s. 6d.

Old lags are constantly giving themselves away and landing back in gaol owing to their deplorable lack of versatility. They evolve a method of crime appropriate to their personalities, and proceed to employ it, in their free time, *ad nauseam*. For how sick they must get of being caught and shut up, just because they have developed a personal style which those eminent criminal critics in Scotland Yard can identify as easily as fingerprints. *Le style c'est l'homme* in crime as in literature, and thankful the police are for the truth of the adage. But in the literature of crime the adage is just as true, only readers are not thankful. A successful detective story writer has to commit on an average two murders a year and try to get away with them; but unfortunately the public is unable to sentence authors to long stretches

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of enforced abstention from crime, however often they may be convicted of dreary repetitiveness. Even the Great Christie nods at times, so what hope is there for the rest of the old brigade? As for the new brigade, the ranks are thin (few of them having the bearing even of potential sergeant-majors, let alone field-marshals) where pseudo-Sayers stands serried with quasi-Queen and mezzo-Mason, while the rear rank bristles with the Wallace Collection. Consequently a detective story that is really baffling, exciting and *new* is an event. Such an event has just occurred.

Not since Dennis Wheatley and Day Lewis first turned to classic crime has there appeared such a promising deserter to detection as Mr. Percival Wilde. Mr. Wilde has written scores of plays, about which I know nothing, but *Mystery Week-End* is, as far as I know, his first detective story. He writes with consummate ease and a mastery of character and situation acquired from long acquaintance with the stage. Some of his tricks are borrowed, but as one is unfamiliar with his technique one can never be sure where his originality ends and his indebtedness begins until one reaches the last pages. The plot deals with a couple of murders in an isolated hotel in the Berkshire Hills of Connecticut, where winter sports are in progress. A crowd of strangers has arrived from New York on a mystery week-end, i.e., they had no idea of their destination when they boarded the train. Heavy snow falls as soon as they arrive, cutting off all communication with the outside world. (The setting, as you observe, is classical.) The story is told in four separate narratives by four of the characters most concerned. Incidentally, the dust cover should be suppressed as it provides too much information—in fact, it was *my* only clue, yet it only saved me from one major error which I hope others will fall into. Without the cover I am prepared to offer 4 to 1 against anyone solving the case. The pace of the proceedings from the start is terrific, and the *tempo* is *crescendo*. My only complaint about *Mystery Week-End* is that it seems too short and left me ravenous for more. Mr. Wilde will be hard put to it to write its equal.

After such intense stimulation the rest of the list must fall rather flat. Yet there are some creditable items which should not be overlooked. Anthony Berkeley's *Not to be Taken* compared to *Mystery Week-End* may be like a perfectly mannered hack in the next stable to a Grand National winner, but quiet animals have their virtue. In *Not to be Taken* the poisoning of a retired engineer in his English country home is described in the first person by one of his neighbours. Mr. Berkeley's style is always engaging and his characters interesting, and we amble round Dorset very happily in his company, but his solution of the mystery strikes a jarring note. Though perfectly fair to the reader, and indeed rather too obvious, it is quite out of character with the criminal as presented by Mr. Berkeley. Such inconsistencies are always cropping up in authors who draw their characters in the round rather than in silhouette. Miss Allingham rounds her characters off with a vengeance, and again in *The Fashion in Shrouds* the motive for murder seems unsatisfactory from all we know of the criminal. As a novel the book is delightful (Albert Campion revels in smart society), but murder is not as readily undertaken as divorce in the fashionable set—at least I hope not. Miss Allingham's world is better prepared for jewel robberies than assassinations.

Mr. Gavin Holt serves up an English country-house murder *à l'Americaine*. His detective drinks heavily, sleeps little, is always ready for personal violence and is inclined to take a tough line in sex matters, with the result that *The Theme is Murder* is happier among the wisecracks than with its theme.

Trent's Last Case appeared twenty-five years ago, and has acquired legendary prestige in detective fiction. In 1936 Mr. E. C. Bentley decided that his hero should stage a come-back. In collaboration with Mr. Warner Allen, Mr. Bentley presented *Trent's Own Case*, a book which for many readers felt like a meeting with a ghost. The famous detective's Edwardian charm was still there, but we looked in vain for the forceful intelligence and intense vitality that would challenge all-comers. Times have so changed in detection that Sherlock himself would meet with condescending smiles from the *aficionados*, were he and his creator to rise from their graves. It is a relief therefore to find in *Trent Intervenes* that Mr. Bentley has withdrawn his ex-champion from the centre of the ring, where he challenged odious comparisons, to the sidelines, more suitable to his record and position. Twelve short detective episodes allow Trent just as much mental exercise as the doctor would recommend at his age. The twelve hurdles are not high; child's play some might call them; but, though an easy jump to any of us, it is a privilege to lie back and watch Trent sailing over them with his impeccably timed stride.

Mr. Philmore's tortuous style, with its *nuances*, its imprecision, its little wagtail darts at invisible psychological midges, makes my life miserable. Not for nothing does he impersonate a schoolmaster; they always know how to tease. In *Short List* five schoolmasters are candidates for a headmastership at one of these modern public schools, and the successful applicant is tossed over a balcony just as his success is about to be announced. Swan goes gliding round the confusing school corridors, chatting to masters and boys with equal, mysterious facility, and reaches a conclusion about the crime that one might expect in a school where they indulge so freely in self-expression.

Flying Blind is a blend of thrills and love interest without much mystery. Miss Campbell is too sympathetic to her hero and heroine to succeed in muffling up this villainous plot to secure an inheritance by killing off the heirs, but her object is to appeal to the heart rather than the intelligence.

Mr. Marco Page won a prize of £250 with *Fast Company* and deserves it for the wisecracks alone. The detective and his wife are based on William Powell and Myrna Loy as far as one can judge, and *Fast Company* reads like a sequel to *The Thin Man*. While these American writers will stick to the tramlines of drink and sex, their plots, however fast they proceed, suffer from the arteriosclerosis of trams. Subtlety is always sacrificed to pace and noise. Miss Taylor uses the other, more portentous, style of American writing. *Figure Away* is one of her Cape Cod-pieces with Asey Mayo acting as *repoussoir*, to lend enchantment to the view. The crimes occur during a gala week at Billingsford; and it is tough on Asey that half the population is hysterical while the other half appear to be high-grade mental defectives. But Miss Taylor is getting much better with her solutions.

Death Walks Softly is included in the list, as it is fairly competent, quiet, English detection by a new writer, with a taste for chemical clues, who is not disgraced by his first work even if his villain is improperly dressed for the part. *Burial Service* represents the exotic setting, a tropical island ruled by a white Sultan, where beachcombers accumulate until their numbers have to be reduced with a heavy lump of iron. Mr. McGuire makes the process quite exciting. The Coles include four detective yarns in *Mrs. Warrender's Profession*, where an old lady does the solving. Nice, mild reading for a hot afternoon.

Do Your Own Time is not a detective story, but an account by an ex-convict of life in San Quentin, the California State penitentiary. You'd be surprised at the things that go on there and the reasons why people are confined there. Whiskey, dope and women appear to be available for any criminal with funds to pay for such luxuries. Yet it is not a night-club paradise, as the warders are always taking pot-shots at the prisoners from the cat-walks where they prowl. The author, Mr. Don Castle, ended up by editing the prison newspaper and improving his style, and, if the result of *Do Your Own Time* is the reform of prison conditions, his time will not have been wasted.

RALPH PARTRIDGE

The Windsor Tapestry. By COMPTON MACKENZIE. *Rich and Cowan*. 16s.

Mr. Compton Mackenzie has written "a study of the life heritage and abdication" of the Duke of Windsor. A Jacobite, he chivalrously breaks a lance in the cause of a King whom he presumably considers a usurper: a Papist, he chivalrously champions a lady who marries and remarries and remarries. But chivalry, alas, is not enough. And the temper in which he writes is likely to disappoint many who share his sympathies. The book is altogether too violent: everyone who does not agree with Mr. Mackenzie is indiscriminately abused. And the heat which would be welcome in a pamphlet becomes intolerable in a volume containing nearly a quarter of a million words. If Mr. Mackenzie had sought more often the appearance of sweet reasonableness, his assaults on Mr. Baldwin, the Archbishop and the *Times* would have been far more telling. The individual whom he most effectively belabours is Mr. Hector Bolitho. The original version of his life of Edward VIII is compared with the revised version that appeared soon after the Abdication—and the alterations quoted. These may well stagger even a cynical reader. Mr. Mackenzie comments: "It is difficult to withhold a tribute of admiration for the thoroughness of the *volte face*: it has the gymnastic, nay, the acrobatic precision of a perfect somersault."

Mr. Mackenzie shows that though Mr. Baldwin was correct in stating that "there is no such thing as what is called morganatic marriage known to our law," the *Times* was quite mistaken in saying that there were no British precedents for a morganatic marriage. The *Times* itself in its obituary of the Duke of Cambridge said that he had "married morganatically" Miss Fairbrother. Moreover Queen Victoria recognised

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at us just because we're going to make the original suggestion that a holiday isn't necessarily a time in which to stop thinking or even, sir, a time in which to go on stopping thinking as usual. When the hot suns of Britain are bronzing that white pacifist body of yours just remember that there isn't really any need to go on being woolly-headed all your life; and that a holiday in fact is not a bad time in which to make a start at getting to the root of all the troubles which beset you and me and all of us to-day. Yes, we know. We're going to talk about Karl Marx before this is finished; and we're going to talk about him because he was the first man ever to take the trouble to get down to that bedrock or rather to those shifting sands on which the capitalist system was so clumsily erected. Of course you are one of those people who believe that if, say, the profit were taken out of the manufacture of armaments, then the whole round world would be O.K. Maybe you're right, but have you ever wondered how, under capitalism, that profit is going to be taken away, or why, under capitalism, such profits can never be removed? No? Maybe you still think that such iniquities are fundamental flaws in our system and that they and their like have only to be taken away for a grand time to be had by all. If you really think that you couldn't do better than lay off the pierrots for a while and read Marx instead. You won't find him difficult unless you're even dumber than we thought. But even if you should find him rather harder going than that high dive you're always going to do to-morrow, just set your teeth—if that isn't against all your principles—and see what a couple of hours' reading will do for you. Even if it but lets a faint glimmer of light into your eyes you won't have done so badly, after all. And you will, in any case, have created some sort of mental appetite which can only be appeased by more and ever more knowledge. That's really all there is to it. Stop funking the first dive and you'll realise what a lot there is to learn about the world you live in. Believe me, it's surprising.

We are, by the way, publishers of Marx and Lenin; so why not write for our catalogue (and explanatory leaflet) before you go away. We can tell you the nearest bookshop to call at to see the Marxist-Leninist classics, which run at 2/6 and 5/-, sixteen volumes, or the latest work by DIMITROV: THE UNITED FRONT (6/-). You won't regret having done so.

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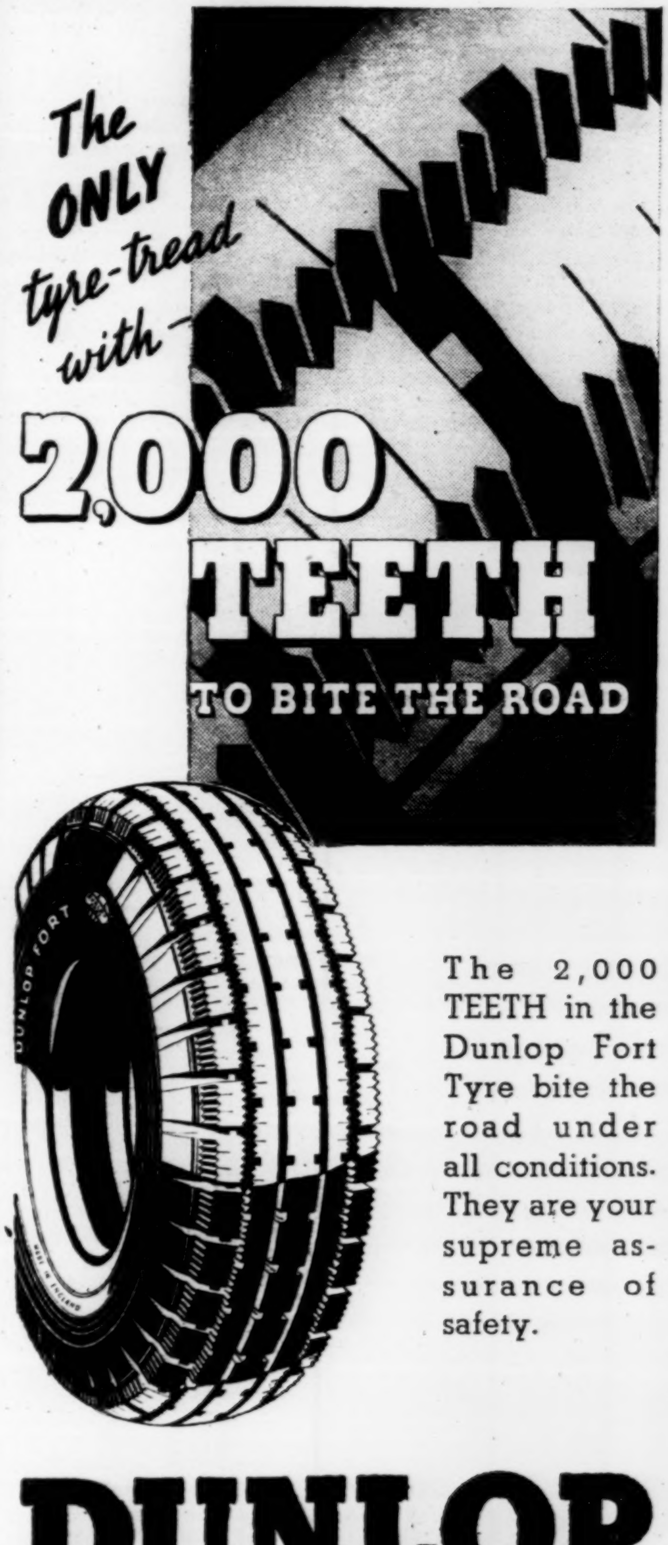

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the morganatic marriage of her uncle the Duke of Sussex by creating his wife Duchess of Inverness. Mr. Mackenzie moreover justly points out that the shabby withdrawal from the Duke of Windsor's wife of the title of Royal Highness amounted in effect to making his marriage morganatic.

Mr. Mackenzie compares favourably the line taken by the Labour Opposition in Australia to the attitude of the Opposition here, but the quotations from the Australian debate are not, in fact, very edifying. He wisely stops short of the unfortunate episodes of the visit to Germany and the proposed trip with Mr. Bedaux which have cooled the sympathies of many who at the time of the Abdication shared Mr. Mackenzie's feelings.

This book, though often very witty, and prompted by the most generous motives, lacks weight, must be considered an error of judgment, and can do little good to the purpose it is meant to serve.

Road Traffic and Its Control. By H. ALKER TRIPP. *Edward Arnold.* 26*s.*

This encyclopaedic volume—No. 7 of the Roadmakers' Library—is written by an Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard, who is the greatest British authority on the subject, and should be purchased and assimilated by everybody concerned in road management. It deals exhaustively and with the aid of innumerable plans with almost every problem confronting road authorities, from the handling of special emergency traffic at sports venues and fashionable weddings to the proper management of old-fashioned streets and the layout of new arterial roads and their junctions. In view of recent proposals for more effective control of cycling traffic, it is interesting to observe Mr. Tripp's anxiety on the subject. The total number of cycling casualties is formidable, and Mr. Tripp ascribes 60 per cent. of them to the cyclist's own fault. They represent an enormous loss of young and adolescent life, as 60 per cent. of them are between the ages of fifteen and thirty. He exonerates club members as being usually expert, and lays the main responsibility on young and irresponsible individuals. He outlines certain well-tried methods of registering accident statistics, and of classifying them. No brief review can do justice to the labour and wisdom concentrated in this invaluable work, which will undoubtedly come to be regarded as the classic authority on its subject.

The Kaiser on Trial. By G. S. VIERECK. *Duckworth.* 21*s.*

There is certainly much to be said in defence of the Kaiser : indeed, the passage of years and recent events in Germany make defence almost easy. Mr. Viereck, who includes among the illustrations of this book one of himself with the ex-Kaiser at Doorn, is an apologist rather than a defender. His method of apology is to describe what might have happened if the ex-Kaiser had stood his trial and if the illustrious dead from Queen Victoria downwards to the less illustrious living, including the author himself, could have been summoned to the witness box. It would need many pages to point out all Mr. Viereck's exaggerations and partisan interpretations of history. Even admitting his whole thesis—the difficulty of the Kaiser's legacy from Bismarck, the suspicions of his own countrymen, his unwillingness to fight in July, 1914, and his misunderstanding of English intentions—we are still left with the real charge against the Emperor which is not answered by this book. For a generation before the war he played the part of the bad neighbour not only to his traditional European enemies, but to his traditional European friends. It was that which unsettled Europe and must be credited as one of the principal causes of the war. Mr. Viereck himself says that " it is easier to understand the Sphinx than to understand the Kaiser." He may find it so, but even after reading his manful efforts to confuse a fairly simple issue the reader will probably feel that the Sphinx remains the more imponderable of the two.

Off in a Boat. By NEIL GUNN. *Faber.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Three classes of readers will enjoy Mr. Gunn's new book : Those who agree with Kenneth Grahame that " there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats " ; those who like romantic descriptions of the Western Isles ; and those landsmen with safe jobs who like to read about the roving life of others. There is, perhaps, a fourth class, namely, those who have enjoyed the author's previous books. They should buy a copy if only to encourage Mr. Gunn in the hazardous life he has recently plunged into, though they will find that he covers much familiar well-written ground. Having been a Civil Servant for nearly twenty years, he suddenly decided to throw up his job and give all his time to writing. He also sold his house and bought an old boat. It turned out to be older than he thought, and the motor almost an antique. But it was too late to turn back, so with his wife, referred to as " the Crew " (fortunately the only touch of small-boat whimsicality Mr. Gunn allows himself), he " drove " and sailed—after he had learned to handle a sail—round about Skye, Mull and Eiggh as the fancy or the weather took him. His descriptive writing has not the spontaneity it had in *Morning Tide*—but as an investigator and reporter he is a great success. In fact, parts of his book are a useful contribution to the social and economic problems of the Western Highlands and the Hebrides. On the whole he should not need to regret his decision to trust to his pen.

Week-end Competitions

No. 439

Set by V. S. Pritchett

The usual prizes of Two Guineas and Half a Guinea are offered for a sonnet entitled Pelion On Ossa, to be written substantially in journalese.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, August 12th.
2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.
3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.
4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 437

Set by T. W. Earp

Many readers are said to select a novel from a perusal of its last paragraph. A first prize of Two Guineas and a second prize of Half a Guinea are offered for the most alluring of last paragraphs, which should not be more than 300 words long.

Report by T. W. Earp

It must be confessed at once that this puzzle belongs to the category in which the setter's personal preferences tinge his verdict on the entries. Try as he may to represent Mr. Everyman or the Absolute, it is in the end by his own failings that he measures the paragraph's allure. So he should have announced that on a hot day, which it is, he prefers fiction of the lighter kind ; that he never likes it to be uplift in disguise ; and that he plumps unashamedly for a more or less happy ending. This quite unfairly rules out from his consideration eight death-bed scenes, three heroes left gazing hopelessly at heavy rain with the promise of more to come, and a lament for the League of Nations. On the other hand, there was something a little too hackneyed about paragraphs ending " Somewhere in the elm-tree behind them a thrush began to sing carelessly, joyously," and " We will still march hand-in-hand towards the dawn." " Piekin " was more stirring, but not quite long enough, with " And now, after reading this little book, you should all be able to commit nine completely detection-proof murders. *My* dead men, at any rate, have told no tales." And, although it is perhaps too near its originals, there is the right tang in " Alixandre's " hero's return, " Big Ben was still aglow as my taxi slid across the empty, gleaming Square ; he struck two o'clock as I left it. Some day I supposed I should have to yawn all night with my peers, but only when I was incapable of better things.

" I had no latch-key, of course, and had not bothered to telephone Chives ; but even I, knowing him as I did, was a little surprised when he opened the door two minutes after my first knock, fully dressed except for his tie, hair sleek, only the horrid gash from eye to chin marring the correctness of his appearance.

" I was inclined to be emotional : I had not expected to see Chives again, nor my Picasso. But he wore his usual air of respect, and disregarded my outstretched hand. . . . Yes ; it was good to be home again."

E. W. Edmonds subtly varies the return theme with " And now the fields were flashing by, the paternal acres grew nearer, and he would be Sir Harold. ' Among those present were ——,' ' the prizes were given away by ——.' Could he keep it up ? Well, he would have a good try. But, as Cook always said, you never know." From his selection of these passages, the setter of the competition lays himself open to the charge of prejudice in favour of the picaresque. This he might try to refute by arguing that, while he has the best possible taste for fiction of the most serious kind, it is the picaresque which provides the most alluring final paragraphs. In any case, he would much like to know what happened to Biddlecombe, whose inventor gives a neat turn to the problem, and to George, so the first prize goes to Allan M. Laing, and the second to Barbara Flatcher.

FIRST PRIZE

" But what happened to Biddlecombe ? " asked Henry, with some impatience.

" That," remarked Mr. Inkpin, in his usual precise tones, " is implicit on page one-forty-three and almost explicit on page two-two-four." And then, as Henry seemed to expect him to go on, he added :

" My dear boy, I have taken the considerable trouble of recording, in some two-fifty-six pages of quite remarkably lucid prose, the whole fascinating story of Armadaile and the Applebys. I have given you thrills and—er—um—rough stuff. I have mingled the happiness of

PORTRAITS OF MEAN MEN

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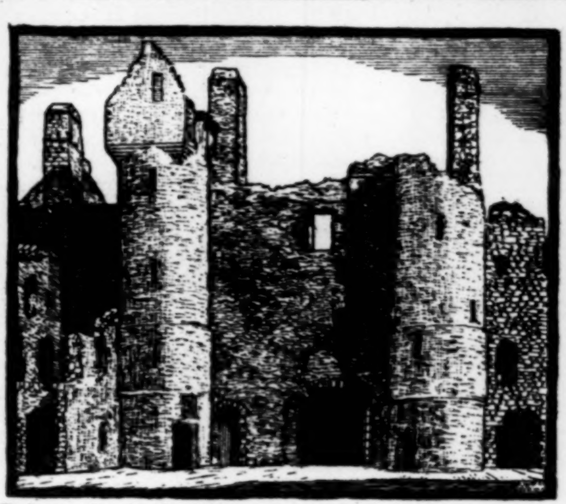

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achievement with the pleasant agony of suspense. I have not, I think, overlooked either humour or the quiet beauty of appropriate descriptive passages. Character is the backbone of my tale. But if, in addition to all this, you expect me to offer you an appendix in the form of a neat Police Report summary that will save you all the effort of thought, then I am afraid, my dear boy, you are going to be disappointed. No casual thumber of these pages will learn all he needs to know from a lightning glance at my final paragraph. No."

Mr. Inkpin paused, sat back in his chair, and cocked an eye at Henry.

" Of course," he went on, blandly, " if you were to ask me, as your solicitor, to elucidate any point not crystal clear to your—er—rum intelligence, I would be prepared to comply. On the usual terms. Yes."

For a moment Henry seemed about to indulge in six-and-eightpence-worth, but in the end he held his tongue. Instead, he took the book the solicitor held out to him and, ignoring Mr. Inkpin's suave " Good afternoon," turned to page one and began to read it carefully once more.

ALLAN M. LAING

SECOND PRIZE

Looking back, George wondered how he had got through it all alive. From the day when he had set out to find the second-hand coffin and the pint of fleas which were stipulated by the will he had been pursued by the malice of the unknown residuary legatee. When, in quest of the coffin, he had ascended the Eiffel Tower only to be seized and flung over, how had he contrived to reach the ground alive? And when, hunting fleas in the upholstery of the Savoy lounge, he had unwarily taken up a tarantula placed there by the Unknown, how had he had the presence of mind and the cool determination to follow the animal to its master's hide-out while suffering agonies from its bite and from a tourniquet improvised out of . . . George smiled as he remembered that tourniquet. There had been a touch of grim humour about it. And who would have guessed that the Unknown would have turned out to be his own . . . ! But he had won through unscathed, thanks to his training at the Hackney Technical School, and now had only happy memories of that blazing coal mine in which he had first met Mabel.

BARBARA FLATCHER

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

PROBLEM 292.—DOTARD'S CLUB

By J. E. Wadey

" Five other members of my club live in my road," said Dotard, " and we all live on the same side. No two of us live in the same house. The numbers of our houses are all prime and each contains two digits; and between them they contain all the digits from 1 to 9. The number of my house is, curiously enough, the average of the six numbers."

Dotard paused to observe my corrugated brow. " You are doubtless performing a rapid calculation." he suggested.

" Who lives next door to you?" I asked.

" No member of my club," was the answer. " Gaffer is the nearest member to me. Indeed we live nearer to one another than any other pair."

" Why then," said I, " Cuscuta Dodder must be one of your members."

" He is," was the reply, " and his number is the lowest."

What is the number of Dodder's house?

PROBLEM 290.—POST MORTEM

The successive scores of the rubbers won by the Deuceace brothers were:

300, 100, 100, 300, 200

This gives an aggregate win of

$$3+2+3+12+10 = 30s.$$

and 30*s*. can be won in 12 ways in all. There were 25 seats in the bus (3+12+10)—one occupied by " Enquirer " and 24 by the 12 pairs of Bridge players.

PROBLEM 289.—FABRICS FROM JUGGINPORE

A set of Low's cartoons goes to: L. W. Dodds, 7 Carlisle Avenue, E.C.3. *Six* points are awarded.

CALIBAN.

PRIZES FOR PROBLEM SOLVERS

A set of Low's cartoons is awarded to the sender of a correct solution selected at random.

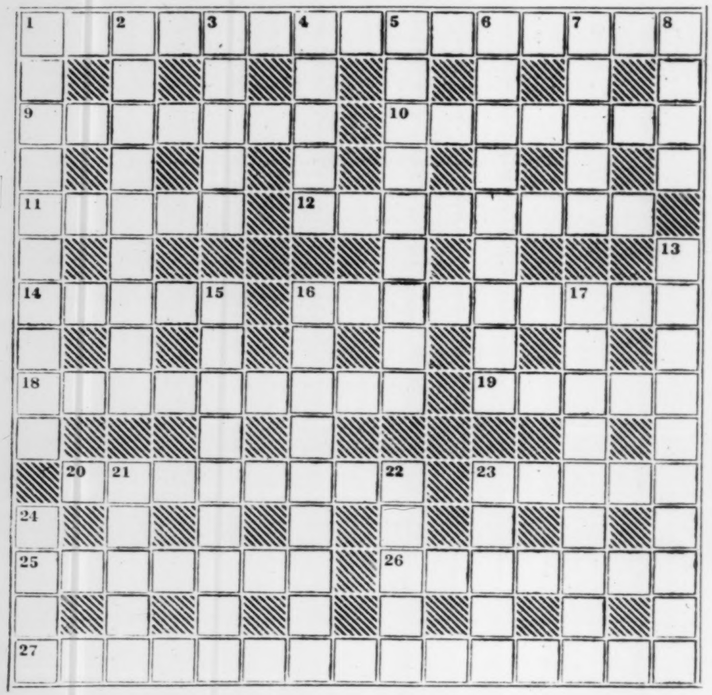
In addition, a record is kept of correct solutions sent, and of the points scored weekly by solvers. On attaining 100 points a solver is entitled to a prize consisting of any book (or books) reviewed or advertised in these columns, of a value not greater than 10*s*. Solvers who have won a prize on this basis are eligible for a second prize on attaining a further 120 points, and for a third prize on attaining a further 150. Solutions must be addressed to CALIBAN, c/o the Editor, and must reach this office not later than Tuesday week following publication of the problem. Solutions to two problems may be sent in one envelope, but on separate sheets of paper.

Some indication should be given of the method of solution.

[U.S.A. Competitors. The Editor regrets that the prizes offered in our Week-end Competitions cannot apply to American competitors.]

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 439

Books to the value of Five Shillings may be chosen by the sender of the first correct solution opened. Post solutions to arrive not later than first delivery Wednesday following the date of issue, addressed to " CROSSWORDS," 10 Great Turnstile, London, W.C.1.



Set by L.-S.

The last week's winner is
E. F. Watling, 21 Sale Hill, Sheffield 10

ACROSS

1. Stock raising would be only one of their activities. (15)
9. Where to let a dog roam? (7)
10. Let the key undo what's not coupled. (7)
11. Any one of these is building ground. (5)
12. Small fishcakes for tea? (8)
14 (rev.). One of the things in Ariel's plume. (5)
16. Such paintings would be water-colours. (9)
18. Where the process of being 20 does not go by the board. (9)
19. He is often discovered by candle-light. (5)
20. Got a date with the Duce. (8)
23. Lively of course. (5)
25. It is willingly granted. (7)
26. Such things always give a sound result. (7)
27. The Wailing Wall is no doubt one of these special districts. (15)

DOWN

1. Family-ar surroundings. (10)
2. How to speed the driver where the Continental traffic rule applies. (9)
3. Try to understand this river for trade. (5)
4. Turpin executed and dismembered. (5)
5. Elephantine telephone message? (9)
6. Training description of the Queen or the Duchess of Gloucester. (9)
7 (rev.). Passes over this. (5)
8. Decentralised swagger. (4)
13. Necessary quality for a help. (10)
15. Canvassed support, as it were. (9)
16. Snub-nosed brevity. (9)
17. Proper description of the set type. (9)
21. Refuse in Aran found in Ayrshire. (5)
22. This admiral's wife was such a duck. (5)
23. This drink would put the V.A.D. O.K. (5)
24. Hurry past. (4)

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

C	O	W	A	R	D	■	S	C	O	T	C	H	E	D
O	■	I	■	E	■	B	■	A	■	H	■	A	■	E
O	W	N	■	F	L	O	O	R	B	O	A	R	D	S
L	■	D	■	U	■	A	■	D	■	U	■	D	■	E
H	O	L	S	T	E	R	■	B	U	G	B	E	A	R
E	■	A	■	E	■	D	■	O	■	H	■	R	■	T
A	S	S	■	■	■	R	O	A	S	T	■	■	■	■
D	■	S	■	I	■	E	■	R	■	S	■	F	■	C
■	■	■	■	N	O	S	E	D	■	■	■	R	A	L
C	■	B	■	S	■	I	■	B	■	M	■	E	■	E
L	O	A	T	H	E	D	■	O	V	E	R	S	E	A
E	■	D	■	I	■	E	■	X	■	S	■	H	■	R
V	I	E	W	F	I	N	D	E	R	S	■	A	D	O
E	■	G	■	T	■	C	■	S	■	U	■	I	■	U
R	E	G	I	S	T	E	R	■	S	P	I	R	I	T

London Amusements

MATINEES

All at 2.30 p.m. unless otherwise stated

ALDWYCH.	**Lot's Wife.**	Mon., Thurs.
AMBASSADORS.	**Spring Meeting**	Wed., Fri.
APOLLO.	**Idiot's Delight.**	Tues. & Thurs.
COLISEUM.	**Circus Season.**	Daily, 2.30
DUCHESS.	**Glorious Morning.**	Wed., Thurs.
DRURY LANE.	**Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo**	Wed. & Sat.
GLOBE.	**"Robert's Wife."**	Wed. and Sat.
STRAND.	**Banana Ridge.**	Wed. & Thurs.
ST. JAMES'.	**Golden Boy.**	Wed., & Thurs.

OPERA AND BALLET

DRURY LANE. Tem. Bar. 7171
Evgs. at 8.45. Mats., Wed. & Sat., 2.45.
BALLET RUSSE de MONTE CARLO
Leonide Massine - - Artistic Director, with
THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

THEATRES

ALDWYCH. (Tem. 6404.) Evgs., 8.30. Mon., Th. 2.30
LOT'S WIFE by Peter Blackmore.
NORA SWINBURNE. J. H. ROBERTS.
"Laughter in every line."—*Daily Herald.*

AMBASSADORS. Tem. 1171. EVGS., 8.30.
Mats., Wednesdays & Fridays, 2.30.
"SPRING MEETING"
A Light Comedy by M. J. Farrell and John Perry.

APOLLO. (Ger. 2663.) 8.30. Tues. & Thurs., 2.30.
IDIOT'S DELIGHT
by Robert E. Sherwood
RAYMOND MASSEY TAMARA GEVA

COLISEUM. Tem. 3161. 2.30 and 8.15 DAILY.
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DUCHESS, Catherine St., W.C.2. Tem. 8243.
Evgs., 8.30. Mats., Wed., Thurs., 2.30. (Smoking.)
GLORIOUS MORNING
by NORMAN MACOWAN.

DUKE OF YORK'S. Tem. 5122. 8.30. Th., S., 2.30.
EDMUND WILLARD,
A. BROMLEY-DAVENPORT, ESMOND KNIGHT in
THE INSECT PLAY (Last Weeks).
A People's National Theatre production.

GLOBE. Ger. 1592. EVGS., 8.30 sharp.
Mats., WEDS. and SATS., 2.30 sharp.
ROBERT'S WIFE
By ST. JOHN ERVINE.

PLAYHOUSE. Whi. 7774.
8.30 (except Mons.). Mats., Wed., Thurs., Sat., 2.30.
POISON PEN
By Richard Llewellyn.
MARGARET YARDE. WALTER FITZGERALD.

STRAND. Tem. 2660. Evgs. 8.30. Wed., Thurs., 2.30
ROBERTSON HARE & ALFRED DRAYTON in
BANANA RIDGE
by Ben Travers.

ST. JAMES'. Whi. 3903.
Evenings, 8.30. Matinees, Wed. & Thurs., 2.30
GOLDEN BOY by Clifford Odets.
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UNITY. (Eus. 5391.) Evenings, ex. Mons., 8.30.
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FAREWELL AGAIN (U).

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HULL. Evgs., 8. Mat., Sat., 5.0 p.m. **Little.**
I Killed The Count
Alec Coppel.

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